

SELECT DISCOURSES

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

B Y

SECKER,

WARBURTON,

JORTIN,

POWELL,

MANN,

PORTEUS,

BLAIR,

BALGUY,

And BISHOP of LANDAFF.

D U B L I N :

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Advertisement.

TH E following Selection of Discourses, published by some of the ablest Advocates of Virtue and Religion, this or any Age has produced, was sketched out by the REV. DOCTOR FORSAYETH, late ARCHDEACON of CORK, and formerly SENIOR FELLOW of TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, a few Days before his Decease. It is now offered to the *Public* ; and particularly recommended to the *Students* of TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, as having been principally

cipally designed for their Use, by one, who throughout the Course of his Life, was most zealous and active in his Endeavours to form the Minds of the rising Generation, to promote the Interests of the Clerical Order, and to contribute to the Happiness of Mankind.

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12 JY 62

A
DISCOURSE
ON
CONFIRMATION.

BY ISAAC MANN, D. D.
LORD BISHOP OF CORK AND ROSS.

*“ Then laid they their Hands on them, and they
received the Holy Ghost.”* ACTS xviii. 17.



A
DISCOURSE
ON
CONFIRMATION.

AS I purpose shortly, God willing, to administer the office of CONFIRMATION, I cannot but wish that the nature of it may be well considered before hand by all such young persons as are then to be presented to me; that they may have a just sense of the importance, and come duly prepared to partake of the benefit of this ordinance. In order therefore to assist you in that preparation, I will lay before you, in a plain and familiar manner, the following particulars.

I. The antiquity and authority of this institution ;

II. Its true nature and rank ;

III. The stipulations and conditions to be entered into at Confirmation ;

IV. The benefit and usefulness of the office ;

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V. The proper age of receiving it ;

VI. The duties and obligations which are comprehended and implied therein.

I. This institution is of primitive antiquity in the Christian Church, and derives its authority from the holy Scriptures. For there the laying on of hands (by which has always been understood the rite of Confirmation) is reckoned, as well as Baptism, among the original, fundamental principles of christianity. Heb. vi. 2. We may therefore well conclude it to have been the constant custom (of which several instances are actually recorded) that in the earliest times, they who were converted and became Christians, were afterwards by imposition of hands CONFIRMED in the religion they had chosen : that is, they were not only further instructed in the faith and practice required by their profession, but were likewise strengthened and supported in their Christian course by the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit conveyed by the laying on of hands. This was *then* done by the Apostles, who were enabled to confer many miraculous powers, peculiar indeed to those days, because they were *then* particularly requisite for the more speedy and effectual propagation of the Gospel. But besides these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which continued no longer in the Church than they were necessary to that end,
the

C O N F I R M A T I O N. 5

the Apostles likewise unquestionably conferred the ordinary ones, which are of perpetual use and necessity in all times, and which by St. Paul's method of reasoning concerning those wonderful gifts, we are authorized to esteem as a more excellent way. 1 Cor. xii. 31. I mean such spiritual aids and assistances, as by helping the infirmities of our frail and corrupt nature, and strengthening virtuous and religious dispositions in the heart, might counteract the force of temptation, and firmly establish men in the practice of their duty.

Now these gifts of grace and holiness are no doubt still mercifully continued to God's faithful people, when sought for with devout supplication and prayer. God hath promised, without any limitation of time, to give his Holy Spirit to every one that asks it: And can we doubt that he will hear the devout prayers of his Church, solemnly assembled together in his presence, with an intent to confirm the religious principles of the rising generation, and to establish his kingdom in their hearts? Christ hath promised that wherever two or three shall be gathered together in his name, there will he be in the midst of them: And can we doubt his approbation and blessing of the pious work we are engaged in? He vouchsafed with the most affectionate and tender condescension to take young children up in his arms, to lay his

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hands upon them and bless them, declaring that of such is the kingdom of God : And can we think that he will reject the free-will offering of such as are desirous solemnly to dedicate the prime of their life to his service ? God was pleased in a supernatural and miraculous manner by the hands of the Apostles to confer the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit : And may we not most assuredly trust, that he who is no respecter of persons, that he who has promised to be with his Church to the end of the world, to keep it under his continual protection and government, will be pleased to sanctify and bless every ordinance, by whomsoever administered, the object of which is the increasing and establishing the influence of piety and virtue : for what is that but the very purpose for which the ministry of Christ upon earth was appointed ?

Such then is the antiquity, and such the authority of this institution, founded on the example of the Apostles, and most reasonably continued down through the several ages of the Church upon this undeniable principle, that the goodness and grace of God, when duly implored, will ever be extended to all his faithful people, to guide and support them in the way of truth and righteousness.

II. The true nature of Confirmation, with its proper rank among Christian ordinances (which

(which is our 2d point) will easily be understood from what hath been already said.

It is an apostolical practice, not founded upon any blind tradition, but recorded in scripture, and *upon that* we rest it: Not that we account it a sacrament (as it is held in the Church of Rome) for this plain reason, that it has no external sign, or form, appointed by Christ; which you all know, is essential to the institution of a Sacrament properly so called. They do indeed, suppose the Chrism, together with the Sign of the Cross, to be the form, or outward and visible sign of this ordinance: but it is a sign appointed not by Christ, but by themselves, without colour of authority from scripture, or any precedent of the primitive Church. In the first and purest days of Christianity, Confirmation was administered without any other ceremonies than laying on of hands with Prayer, and this is the precedent which is followed by our Church, according to the original simplicity of the institution.

The laying on of hands, is obviously significant of affection and good-will, as appears both by the practice of the Patriarchs, and that of our Blessed Saviour already alluded to. This external act, though not of the nature of a Sacrament, is yet justly styled a sign to certify the persons confirmed of God's favour to them, a token and memorial of the divine

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gifts and graces accompanying the due use of this religious office. Not that we pretend to have the power of conveying the divine favour and blessing at our own arbitrary will and pleasure; for that cannot be conveyed by the hands or prayers of any man whatsoever, but to such only as are duly qualified by the good disposition of their hearts to receive it. It is not ours to give, but it shall be given by our heavenly Father to them who are prepared for it; to them who lift up their hearts from earthly things to heavenly, and take care to become fit Temples for the Holy Ghost.

III. Hence ariseth 3dly the necessity of certain solemn stipulations and promises to be made before Confirmation is administered.

The Apostles themselves cannot be supposed to have laid their hands on any for the purpose of conferring the gifts of the Holy Spirit without a certain assurance of their adhering to the profession they had embraced. Much less do we, their unworthy successors! presume to administer the office of Confirmation without requiring (our Church hath expressly appointed it) an explicit and personal declaration from every one who comes to be confirmed, that he doth,
 “ in the presence of God, and of the congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow,
 “ that was made in his name at his baptism,
 “ ratifying and confirming the same in his
 “ own person, and acknowledging himself
 “ bound

“ bound to believe and to do all those things
 “ which his godfathers and godmothers then
 “ undertook for him.” Every person is asked
 whether he does this, and before the office is
 proceeded in he must solemnly answer “ I
 do.” Whoever then comes to be confirmed,
 instead of imagining that he has nothing to do
 but to receive the bishop’s blessing, must on
 the contrary seriously consider that he hath an
 important office to perform, which if he doth
 not perform, no blessing, no effect of the
 blessing will follow. For, as in baptism it is
 not the mere ceremony of sprinkling or wash-
 ing the body with water that can save us, but
 the answer of a good conscience towards God ;
 or in other words, a covenant conscientiously
 entered into with God, that the heart shall be
 sprinkled (as the scripture expresses it) from an
 evil conscience, which is declared for the in-
 fant by its sponors ; so in like manner in this
 office the same engagement and covenant is
 made by the persons themselves, who being
 now come to years of discretion, publickly
 profess, that they are bound to believe and do
 whatsoever was promised in their name and be-
 half ; which is expressed in the catechism in
 these three particulars ; viz. “ 1st, that they will
 “ renounce the devil and all his works, the
 “ pomps and vanities of this wicked world
 “ and all the sinful lusts of the flesh ; 2dly,

“ that they will believe all the articles of the
“ Christian faith, and 3dly, that they will keep
“ God’s holy will and commandments, and
“ walk in the same all the days of their life.”

I state the very words of the Catechism, as being probably most familiar to the youth who are about to be presented for Confirmation ; but I trust nevertheless, that there are few of them to whom the full sense and import of this solemn renunciation and promise have not been duly explained by their parents, or their pastors, if not by both. Sure I am, too much care cannot be taken in this point by either. Neither is the additional attention of the sponsors, where it can be applied, and there is need of it, by any means to be dispensed with. The Church has appointed them for the purpose of superintending the religious education of the child, and they have entered into a voluntary engagement, that they will, as far as in them lies, provide that he shall be brought up to lead a godly and christian life. This engagement you are now to discharge them from, and to take upon yourselves. May you do so with sincerity and seriousness !

Without such a stipulation as this, the office of Confirmation, it must be confessed, would be but an useless and unmeaning superstition ; whilst on the other hand, if this be duly attended to, it cannot but appear to the serious and
unpre-

unprejudiced a most rational, venerable and important rite. Under this description it was consented to and approved by the most learned Lutheran doctors (in a conference at Ratibon 1541) “ as a religious rite of the highest advantage to the edification of youth and of the whole Church, agreeable to scripture and uncorrupt antiquity*.” Nor is Calvin’s testimony wanting in favour of this practice. His words are, “ Such imposition of hands as implies no more than a benediction I commend, and wish it were instantly restored to its genuine use.” And again ; “ The gesture used by the Apostles, I look upon as a recommendation and offering as it were, of the person to God.”† And he is followed in his opinion of the utility and expediency of Confirmation by some of the most eminent divines of his persuasion. ‡ Such was the early opinion of the foreign Churches concerning this rite, when administered in its proper form and primitive simplicity ; and nothing but the unhappy defect in their form of Church government can be supposed to have prevented their adopting it. Indeed the practice is said to have been some years since actually

* Chemnitii Exam. Conc. Trident. part 2.

† Calvini Inst. c. xix.

‡ Limborchi Theol. Chris. Lib. v. c. 77.

Ostervaldi Compend. Theol. Chris. part 2.

ally restored at Geneva*. And much it were to be wished that our dissenting brethren might be prevailed on to follow so laudable an example: nor is it entirely to be despaired of; several of the most distinguished characters for piety and learning, and therefore of the highest authority among them in the last century, having written in most favourable terms on the subject †.

IV. I am to shew you in the 4th place the use and benefit of Confirmation; and certainly, to impress on the minds of youth a just sense of their duty, to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; to flee from all youthful lusts, which war against the soul, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world; to renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God; to impress a deep and early sense of these great duties of morality and religion, I say is to lay a good foundation against the time to come; and we may trust with God's blessing (which we solemnly implore in this office) it will be a defence against the strength of temptation. This life is a state of probation, which necessarily requires moral restraint and self-government, and numerous are the trials which result from thence, though they are no other than the gracious

* Archbp. Secker Serm. on Confirmation.

† Mr. Baxter, Mr. Calamy, and others.

cious purposes of divine providence for the proof and improvement of virtue ; but besides these, there is a variety of temptations arising from the frailty of nature, and the perverseness of corrupt appetites ; from the circumstances of the state of life they are placed in, whether it be a state of labour and care, or of ease and enjoyment (and it is difficult to say which of those two conditions is the most dangerous to virtue) for alas ! what incident or circumstance of human life doth not bring its own respective temptation ; whilst the enemy of souls is continually setting his snares and availing himself of every art that the most exquisite and malicious subtlety can suggest ? This being the case, how can unexperienced and unsuspecting youth be better guarded against these dangers, how can they be more effectually trained up in the way they should go, than by such a solemnity as this ?

Something like this was practised among the Jews ; every young person at the age of thirteen years being obliged to give a proof before the congregation of his knowledge of the law, and to make a solemn declaration that from that time forward, he looked upon himself as answerable for his own actions, and took the consequences on his own head, for which before this ceremony the father was held to be accountable : and the rite concluded with suitable prayers and praises.

V. The

V. The age at which Confirmation is to be administered, is by our Church, with her usual wisdom and moderation, described in general terms, requiring only that it be a *competent* age, without any other determination than that young persons be able “ to say the Creed, “ the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and answer to the other questions “ in the Catechism.” By which however, it must have been intended not only that they should perfectly repeat the rudiments of their religion by rote, but that being well instructed in the meaning, and seriously entering into the force and spirit of them, they should be able to understand the importance and necessity of faith in God through Christ, and of repentance from sin and dead works to serve the living God, in the love and practice of holiness and virtue. When a young person is impressed with a just sense of these things, he is then of a competent age to be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed, but not before. And although the capacity of the human mind, as well as the opportunities of instruction and knowledge be so exceedingly various, that no certain age can be peremptorily specified, because none can exactly suit every particular case; yet it is the earnest desire of those to whom this office is committed in our Church, that none be presented but such as are qualified in the manner that has just been described; and as far as
a general

a general rule can take place, they are expected to have attained their fourteenth year. A late most eminent prelate, (whose sentiments command great respect) * recommends the age of sixteen years : and for my own part, to speak my opinion fully and freely on the subject, I think the whole benefit and efficacy of Confirmation depends so much on maturity of understanding and seriousness of disposition, that I cannot but request that the young persons to be presented to me should not only be of riper years, than many frequently are, when they come to be confirmed, but should also be well prepared to receive the holy communion *on the next occasion* †.

The celebration of the Lord's Supper is acknowledged to be the highest and most solemn part of publick worship ; but it is, alas ! the most neglected, whether it be through groundless scruples, or hardened indifference. Some, perhaps, by indulging crude notions of the sublime and mysterious nature of the Sacrament, may be overwhelmed by a sense of their own unworthiness, and so by a most strange perversion, the very height of their veneration for its awful sanctity drives them into a disuse of it. Such as these, whose error proceeds from a disposition though ill directed yet truly religious,

* Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London, in his directions in order to Confirmation.

† This is expressly required in the review of the office, 1689.

religious, are to be treated with great compassion, and may be taught, one would hope, to adopt more proper notions, by contemplating that holy institution in its merciful and practical intention to strengthen and confirm the soul in habits of goodness, and to refresh and comfort us lest we be wearied and faint in our minds. In all our conflicts it is most useful for us to look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. It is our duty to set him before us as our pattern, and follow his steps. His humility consisted not in declining but obeying the will of God, and so ought ours. In a strict sense none of us can be worthy of the least of God's mercies : but the less worthy of them we know ourselves to be, the greater ought to be our thankfulness for them ; and is not the holy communion a sacrifice, as it were, of praise and thanksgiving, which it must surely be meet and right and our bounden duty to offer ? Nor can any kind of unworthiness, except sin persisted in without repentance, be any just hindrance to communicating.

The nature and the occasion of St. Paul's denunciation against unworthy receivers, 1. *Cor.* xi. have been much misunderstood. He threatens

threatens *temporal* punishment, viz. sickness and death: we are too apt erroneously to extend it to everlasting punishment in the world to come; for which his words give no just ground. What he there condemns was no doubt an act of most outrageous profaneness. The Corinthians in their communion did not *discern the Lord's Body*. They did not consider the spiritual nature of the Lord's Supper, nor attend to its proper end and design; but instead of keeping up the religious purpose for which they appeared to come together, *to shew forth the Lord's death*, by a devout remembrance of his body broken and his blood shed for the sins of the world, they made a luxurious and disorderly feast, to the dishonour of God and the contempt of their poor Christian brethren. But what resemblance is there between this case and that which we are describing? between the most daring presumption and the most humble self-distrust? Certainly none? And further (which is very material to observe) the crime the Corinthians were guilty of cannot now be committed. There is no Christian Church in our days, of whatever sect or profession, in which due care is not taken, according to their respective customs, for the regular and devout celebration of the Lord's Supper. This if well considered, must, one would think, tend to remove such scruples.

The

The unworthiness then, that now prevails is not misbehaviour at the Lord's table, but the unworthiness of a thoughtless, wicked life, which keeps men from it. For want of instruction in their youth (which is the proper season for sowing good seed in the heart) they commonly enter upon their different stations in the world without much concern or care about religion, which they take upon trust from the practice that happens to prevail; and if they think at all on the subject, are willing to flatter themselves, that it will be as well at the last with them as with their neighbours. And thus, unhappy mortals! though their hopes of salvation in the next world are built upon the sacrifice of Christ's death, they wilfully pass their whole time in this without even commemorating that precious death. If on some solemn occasion they find it proper to save appearances, they then alledge that they are not prepared. But what is their notion of sacramental preparation? What steps have they taken towards it? These are points which it imports them to put to their own consciences, and that not lightly, or as dissemblers with God, but seriously and earnestly, as highly concerning the salvation of their souls. And God grant that they may come to a timely and just sense of the danger of their condition, and amending their ways and their doings, may walk in
all

all the commandments of the Lord blameless!

The holy communion, how sacred soever in itself, or how abstrusely soever it may be represented, will appear in a clear and true light if you consult your Bible and Common Prayer-book. St. Paul directs, Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup ; and the last answer in the Church Catechism contains every article of examination that can be necessary for that purpose. And what can there be in this which is too much to require of youth when come to the years of discretion? What time indeed can be so proper to enter on this religious duty, as when the soul is free from any very foul corruption, and voluntarily dedicated to the service of God by a solemn and explicit engagement? It is only when the conscience is defiled by habits of sin that men are afraid to look into themselves, and so put off the task from time to time, and thereby make it much the more burdensome. But whatever difficulty may arise from delaying this necessary work, it might be prevented by a regular perseverance in a very plain and easy method, which I will take this opportunity to recommend to both young and old ; to the young, because it cannot be begun too early, and to the old, because it ought not to be left off at any time of life.

The

The method I speak of is this. Every night seriously to review the passages of the preceding day; to call yourselves to account not only for every gross transgression, but every word you have spoken, and every thought you have wilfully entertained in your heart, which had any tendency to profaneness, malevolence, or impurity: remembering however, that as in a moral light nothing that is the object of our desires and designs is so slight as to be insignificant, so on the other hand, nothing that is not cherished and encouraged by the inclination and will is at all the subject of self-examination. Wandering thoughts which dart into the mind we know not how, without our concurrence, and pass through it, or remain there without our approbation, are not in our power to controul, and consequently cannot be chargeable to our account. By the discipline of daily self-examination in this rational method, you will always know the true state of your souls, and by reforming, as you find occasion, what is amiss, you will never be unprepared for the Lord's Supper, but may always safely partake of it with humble confidence in the merits of our blessed Saviour.

Such as have neglected to receive the holy Sacrament until they are advanced in life, and then offer themselves for Confirmation, if they have any rational notion of the office, ought
not

not only (as hath been recommended to the young) to communicate the very first opportunity, but likewise to continue with them in the frequent and devout use of that great duty, which was appointed by Christ for the gracious purpose of strengthening and refreshing the soul, and making it more lively and vigorous in every act of devotion and obedience.

As to those who have been partakers of the holy communion, let them consider that Confirmation is not designed for their use. By receiving the Lord's Supper they have already ratified and renewed their baptismal vows, and as far as they live a suitable life, may devoutly expect every benefit that can be received from this preparatory institution.

And let them likewise who have been already confirmed, consider, that it is not only unnecessary, but improper, to repeat a ceremony which is to ratify the covenant made in baptism; because baptism itself can be administered but once, there being but one baptism for the remission of sins. What then is the repeating of Confirmation, but laying again the foundation, when you ought to be completing the superstructure, when you ought to be continually advancing from strength to strength, and endeavouring to come unto a perfect man?

VI. I come now in the last place to speak of the obligations and duties required and implied by

by this religious rite. And they are most numerous and weighty ; being in fact no less than all that you owe to God, your neighbour and yourselves. In short, the obligation you are about to take upon yourselves is that most comprehensive one of leading in all respects (whatever station or condition you may be in) an holy and a christian life : a life of the most humble reverence for the infinite perfections of God, of submission to his will, and of obedience to his commands ; a life of justice and integrity in all your dealings with others, of charitable candour for their faults and compassion for their wants ; a life of temperance and sobriety in the use of the good things of this world, of patience and contentment under the evil things, and such a watchful government of your temper and passions, as may with the divine blessing preserve you from all uncleanness of flesh and spirit. By this course you may habitually direct all your actions and designs to the glory of God, and by your example recommend and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

To be bound to so many duties may perhaps be reckoned a burden and hardship ; as we are hereby obliged to give up many pleasures which we see are so highly valued and eagerly pursued by others : and yet if this be fairly stated and rightly understood, it will on the contrary appear

pear to be in truth a blessing and happiness, and most heartily ought you to thank your heavenly Father that he hath thus called you to a state of salvation. Sensual and sinful indulgences, how delusive soever they may be to such as give themselves no trouble to consider their natural effects and consequences, cannot deceive those who reflect that they are at the very best vain and transitory, and when enjoyed without moderation or restraint, productive of much real, lasting misery. They undermine the native ease and tranquility of your mind, deprive you of the delightful consciousness of the divine favour, bring upon you present shame and remorse, and a most fearful looking for of judgment and indignation at the last day. All this, I say, is the certain effect of a wicked life ; whereas, on the other hand, the proper government of our appetites and passions, the subduing inordinate lusts, and keeping the several powers and faculties of the mind under due regulation and harmony with each other (which is the essence of practical christianity) is a certain fund of quietness and comfort in this life, and assurance of happiness for ever in that which is to come.

Now seeing that it imports us in the highest degree to consider well the infinite difference of those two states, it must without question be an unspeakable advantage and blessing to be apprized

apprized of that difference betimes : This is done by our Church in the catechism, and you are now about to declare your thankful acquiescence in what is there required of you, as the means of intitling yourselves to a blessed immortality. And can that be purchased at too high a rate ? Remember the expostulation of Naaman's servants, " If the Prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it ? How much rather then, when he saith unto thee, wash and be clean ? " Harken to the ministers of God when they explain his word, and if like Naaman, you embrace the conditions there proposed, you will not fail to be convinced, as he was, of their efficacy. Consider yourselves as temporary inhabitants of this world, but connected by dearer and more important interests with the next. Suffer not the most distant suspicion to lodge in your breast that God is an austere and rigorous master : he is, on the contrary, the gracious, compassionate lover of souls. Receive not his commandments with reluctance, for they are not grievous ; but obey them cheerfully, as intended for your good both here and hereafter. Look upon the engagement you are now to enter into, but as the commencement of your spiritual life, and take care to lead the rest of it according to this beginning. Reverence the excellent nature which God hath
given

given you. Descend not to any practice that may pollute and debase it ; but endeavour continually to grow in grace and in all virtue. Consider that you are made but a little lower than the Angels, and designed for immortality and glory. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Acquaint yourselves with God, and set him always before you ; for he is always present with you. He is your inspector and judge. Guard therefore against whatever may at any time tempt you to displease him. Give not up your virtue and innocency, even in the slightest instance. Beware of the danger of levity and dissipation. They will insensibly undermine that native modesty and delicacy which God hath graciously planted in your breast for a defence against sin. Under the disguise of trifling indulgences are often concealed the arts of seduction, to which if you once consent to listen, you will be betrayed into the power of the enemy, and by little and little, will be wretched slaves to corruption and vice ; the powers of your mind will be so enfeebled and disabled, that you cannot do the things that you would wish to do. You may see the beauty and excellency of virtue ; but you will nevertheless follow the most pernicious courses. This is the tendency of giving way on any occasion to what your conscience disapproves. It is by degrees, not all at once, that men become des-

perately wicked. Guard then, I say, against sin in its most distant approaches. Let neither fashion, nor example, nor any other consideration prevail on you to follow a multitude to do evil ; but let your own religious sense of things, your own conviction of what is right be the constant rule of your actions. When any criminal pleasures entice you, call to mind how they were resisted and subdued in the vigour of youth by Joseph, and say with the like effectual abhorrence as he did, How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God ? Read the holy Scriptures as every Christian ought, carefully and daily. You will there find not only precepts for your direction, but examples for your imitation. You will there find that holy men have actually walked with God, and in this life had their conversation in Heaven, knowing that they could not hope to see God hereafter in his glory, if they did not to the best of their power endeavour to imitate him here in his purity and holiness. Keep innocence then, I beseech you, and take heed to the thing that is right, for that only will bring a man peace at the last.

Trust not however, my beloved Children, to the strength of your resolutions, or the goodness of your own hearts. We are at best but very weak creatures, and though there are still noble remains of the perfection in which our first parents were created, which appear
in

in the knowledge and conviction of our duty, yet in practice we fatally experience the frailty and corruption which were introduced into our frame by their transgression. Our intentions may be laudable ; but our endeavours to execute them are strangely feeble and imperfect ; and when we think we stand most securely, we are frequently at that very time most in danger of falling. Call therefore earnestly and constantly upon God for the assistance of his grace to defend and deliver you from all the deceits of the world, the flesh and the devil. Be diligent and regular in the worship of God, both in your private devotions and in the publick service of the Church ; not forsaking (as the manner of too many is) the holy table, for which the office of Confirmation, as I have shewn, is intended to prepare you. And I pray God, your hearts may in reality be so well prepared, that you may fitly and devoutly shew forth the Lord's death, not only in that blessed Sacrament, but in the whole course of your lives, mortifying all corrupt affections and lusts, and crucifying the whole body of sin.

This, my beloved Children in Christ, is what I judged might be useful to assist you in preparing yourselves for receiving Confirmation. I have endeavoured to give you a just sense of the nature and importance, the benefits and duties of this institution. If I have taken somewhat a larger compass in my dis-

course than is usual perhaps on the like occasion, it will not, I humbly trust in God, be altogether unprofitable to you. To me it is not grievous, to you it is safe. It was my desire to furnish you with solid principles, by which the whole tenor of your Christian conduct might be consistently regulated ; the basis of all which is such an habitual reverence for the Divine presence and inspection, as may make you earnest to, approve yourselves to his all-seeing Eye in every action and design, in every occurrence in life, and every sentiment of the heart. There is no event, whether regular and important, or casual and accidental, that can happen in the world, but by his appointment and permission. He knows all we do or think. He is about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways. Our going out and our coming in, our down sitting, and our up rising are all open and manifest to him ; no organ of the body, no faculty of the mind, no possible circumstance of our being can be hid from his knowledge, or elude his cognizance. He therefore ought to be in ALL our thoughts. A regularity in morning and evening worship may by some be thought sufficient. But whoever wishes to confine his intercourse with his Maker to certain stated returns, that man's religion is vain. True religion is a vital principle, and its office is to direct and invigorate our whole frame, as well on ordinary as
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on solemn occasions. The fear and love of God must be with our whole mind and strength and soul, not only in the duties of religion, (though happy would it be for the world if *they* were better attended to) but in the common affairs of whatever situation and circumstances we are placed in by his divine providence. And as amidst the great variety of stations and distinctions in the world, that which falls to any one's share brings with it duties more particularly personal to himself; let me therefore point out to you such rules for the regulation of your conduct as appear to me to be best adapted to your respective ranks and conditions. And this I trust will be kindly accepted as a further proof of my affectionate concern for your spiritual and everlasting interest.

It will not be long, my good Children, before you will be of age to enter upon some of the various callings of the world, and to fill that station for which Providence designs you, in the future course of your life. Whatever be that station, you are now laying the foundation to fill it with integrity and virtue; and the result of integrity and virtue cannot but be credit and happiness to yourselves, and benefit to the publick.

If you are placed in a lower station, do your duty with humility, contentment and diligence, as servants of God. Be the talents he

has entrusted you with ever so few, you are accountable to him for them. That holy Providence that hath appointed the several orders and conditions of men, expects that we fulfil the respective duties and offices of the situation we are placed in, according to the best of our power. Idleness and sloth are sinful in every station. In the lower stations, labour and diligence are indispensably necessary. Your daily bread cannot be had without them. Be not persuaded to neglect the proper business of your calling, and the care of your family, upon any ground whatever ; no, not even that you may have more time for the offices of devotion. Such a principle is not a true, well founded, but a mistaken reverence for religion. They who are thus led away forget that to obey is better than sacrifice ; they forget that our Saviour condemns the notion, that we are better heard for much speaking. It is not by exceeding our neighbours in the number and length of our prayers, but by the honesty and integrity of our lives, that we can recommend ourselves to God. Be assured, that no man can serve God more acceptably, or provide more certainly for his happiness in the next world, than he who carefully and in the fear of God dischargeth his duty in some honest employment in this.

If your lot be cast among the higher ranks, let me exhort you to use your superiority with
thankfulness

thankfulness to Him who giveth you richly all things to enjoy ; with due government of your passions and desires ; with obliging courtesy and affability to your inferiors ; with compassion and charity to the distressed ; with paternal care of those who in the lower employments depend on you for bread ; and with benefit to all as far as your influence can reach. Instead of presuming on your abilities to do mischief (which is no better than being a wild beast to your fellow creatures) remember that true dignity is to be maintained only by doing good, and respect is to be gained only by making the talents and station, with which Divine Providence hath been pleased to distinguish you, the means of a general blessing.

If your station be in the middle rank ; that is happily free from the temptations and evils of either extreme, and was preferred by wise and pious Agur on that account ; and though the support of such a state requires the exertion of industry and diligence, frugality and carefulness, be thankful that *with* this exertion you can acquire all the essential comforts of life. Aim not at things too high for you, but with modesty and sobriety conform to the circumstances of your situation ; apply to your business with due diligence, whether it be your farm, or your merchandize. Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy

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might.

might. But take heed at the same time, that your hearts be not engrossed by the cares and riches of this life. For, they will lay you open to the temptations of fraud and dishonesty. In all your dealings let this great truth be uppermost in your minds, that you have a soul to be saved, as well as a fortune to make. Set not your hearts on the profits and pleasures this wretched world can give, were it possible you could obtain them all. For, what shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Consider yourselves as made for nobler enjoyments than this world can bestow. Seek therefore before all things the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and (as the wise son of Sirach exhorts) glorify your soul in meekness, and give it honour according to the dignity thereof. [Ecclus. x. 28.]

To this advice for your conduct in that state of life to which it shall please God respectively to call you, let me take this occasion to add a word or two, in which all who hear me are concerned, whatever be their condition and circumstance. What I mean to say is in behalf of the Church, of which by your own solemn act you are about to declare yourselves to be members. Let me entreat you, when you shall be settled in the world, that you will retain in your mind a due sense of the purity and excellency

lency of that church to which you belong ; that you will retain a just love and regard for its doctrine and constitution, and a becoming zeal for its welfare and prosperity. We are surrounded by those who bear no good will to this our Sion. It is the more necessary for her sons to stand up in her defence, and to cherish her establishment ; not indeed with an illiberal party spirit, but although with brotherly indulgence to the prejudice of others, yet with a warm affection for the principles in which you were educated and confirmed ; with due regard for the ministers, whether superior or inferior, of that church of which you are professed members ; to esteem them very highly in love for their work sake, and in consequence and testimony of that love to respect their persons, and kindly to protect them in the enjoyment of their rights and properties. We desire not to have dominion over your faith, but to be helpers of your joy. Let not our moderation perversely become the occasion of your luke-warmness and indifference towards *us*. No ; my beloved, we look for better things from you. As our's is the only church to which you can have recourse for Confirmation (in a rational and scriptural way) we trust that you will keep this in remembrance, and in proportion to the earnestness with which you now desire the blessing which we humbly trust will by God's

grace accompany this rite, you will bear a good will, as well to them who instruct and prepare you for it, as to those who are appointed to confer it. In particular, we entreat you to remember us in your prayers, and to implore a blessing upon all the offices of our church; so that as it is established by the law of the land, upon the best model of antiquity, it may please God to continue it for ages, an example to other christian churches, both in the purity of its doctrine and moderation of its discipline, and the excellency of the lives of its members.

The following directions originally given by his Grace the Lord ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY to the parochial Clergy, in order to the better disposition of Youth in their respective Cures, for their Confirmation by the Bishop, and their consequent approach to the Lord's Table, are now recommended to be carefully observed, on account of their manifest utility and importance.

- I. **T**HAT every parochial minister enquire in his parish who they are, who having been baptized, are not confirmed.
- II. **T**HAT he apply himself to such, and examine them, and instruct them fully in the principles of the Christian religion, and especially in those which relate to their vow in Baptism; asking them particularly those Questions, to which their sureties answered in their name, viz. “*Dost thou renounce ?*” “*&c.*” “*Dost thou believe in GOD ? &c.*” “*Wilt thou obediently keep GOD's holy will ?*” “*&c.*”
- III. **T**HAT he shew the nature and usefulness of Infant-baptism and Confirmation, and the necessity of an early dedication of themselves to the service of Christ, as he has opportunity in private, or at least in some publick sermon, or catechetical exercise.

IV. **T**HAT

- IV. THAT he permit none to come again who have been confirmed already.
- V. THAT he bring none to be confirmed, who are under fourteen years of age, unless they are greater proficient in Christian knowledge and piety, than children ordinarily are at those years.
- VI. THAT he set down the names of those he finds fit, and intends to present in a list, together with their respective ages.
- VII. THAT he desire their sureties or parents, or some one or other of them, if it may be, to come along with him and them at the time of Confirmation.
- VIII. THAT all possible care be taken to prevent crouds in the Chancel, and to keep the whole Church from rude noises and disturbances.
- IX. WHEN he comes with the persons to be confirmed, that he endeavour to bring them in the order as they stand upon the list, and call them over; and after they have answered to their names, that he present them.
- X. THAT he take care that none of them depart till the whole office be finished.
- XI. THAT he keep the list by him, that he may remember who are to be called upon to prepare for the Lord's Supper.
- XII. THAT he frequently apply himself to them in private admonition, to excite and assist their preparation for the Lord's Table.

SECKER'S

S E C K E R ' s
T W O S E R M O N S
O N T H E
D U T I E S *of the* Y O U N G .

TIT. ii. 6.

*Young Men likewise exhort to be sober-
minded.*

ON THE
DUTIES *of the* YOUNG.

TIT. ii. 6.

Young Men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.

INSTRUCTING men to *remember their Creator in the days of their youth**, is laying in their hearts the only foundation of every thing good and happy; but the work is far from being completed, when the foundation is laid. Not only the general duties of life are to be built upon it; but the particular duties of every one's condition in life: for these of all others we are most concerned, and yet often least willing to know and attend to. They should therefore be drawn out, and laid before us as minutely as they well can: and each be called upon to study those more especially, which he is more especially obliged to practise. Now as the several tempers, ranks, and employments of men, and the several relations
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* Eccl. xii. 1.

they stand in to each other, so their several ages also, lay them under peculiar obligations: for which reason St. Peter and St. John in their epistles address themselves to younger persons, and to elder separately: and St. Paul in this epistle directs Titus to do the same thing. But though both have much need of admonition, yet the young plainly need it most; as they are just entering into the world, with little knowledge, less experience, and yet scarcely ever any distrust; with lively spirits and warm passions to mislead them, and time to go a great way wrong, if they do not go right. In the spring season of life, especially as it advances towards summer, whatever the soil produces, (and the human heart is fruitful of evil) shoots out so fast, that a few days neglect of weeding and pruning occasions a visible alteration for the worse. And therefore the utmost care should be taken then, to keep all in good order by the continual exercise of that *sobriety of mind*, that considerate self-government, which the apostle prescribes indeed to every one, but which they who principally want it, ought to understand as principally prescribed to them. It is true, in this verse he mentions only *young men*; but in the preceding he had given the same rule for young women: and accordingly I shall speak to both without distinction, in two discourses on this subject.

I. The

I. The first and chief thing, in which young people are concerned to shew sobriety of mind, is moderating their natural fondness for pleasure; and the two sorts of pleasure from which they are in danger, are, sensual gratifications, and gay amusements.

As to the former, St. Paul hath directed that *fornication and all uncleanness be not once named amongst Christians* *. And the less they are named, even to caution against them, the better: provided it be well understood and considered, that they not only fill the lives of those who are guilty of them, and of others, with a variety of temporal sufferings, too commonly experienced; but fatally indispose them to the love of God and virtue, and disqualify them for the spiritual happiness of the world to come. Therefore, *dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, whose chief interest lies not here, but in another state, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul* †. All ranks, both sexes, how strangely soever multitudes of one seem to forget it, are equally bound by this restraint: bound to avoid every thing likely to misguide their conduct, or to inflame their desires; and to employ their thoughts so constantly on what is good or lawful, as to exclude from them what is bad. For by such care, early taken, the preservation of their innocence will be easy:

* Eph. v. 3.

† 1 Pet. ii. 11.

easy: which for want of it is falsely imagined impossible. Thus then, to speak in the words of our apostle, *let every one know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles, which know not God**. And to that end, *let every one, as Solomon advises, keep his heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life*†.

Together with the sins of this kind, those of intemperance in drinking, or even eating, which are closely connected with them, ought to be carefully shunned, as peculiarly opposite to the character of *sober-minded*, by young people; who of all others have the least need of such indulgences, and are the most hurt by them; subjected to painful and dangerous diseases; exposed to early distress in their circumstances; and besides, for the most part, either sunk into stupidity and insignificance, or raised into wildness and madness, frequently followed by proportionable dejection and melancholy. Therefore, instead of such excess, they must, as St. Paul farther directs, *keep under the body, and bring it into subjection*‡; not by hurtful or fanciful austerities, but by rational self-denial: remembering, that even in common exercises and contests of strength and activity, *every man, that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown,*

* 1 Thess. iv. 4. 5. † Prov. iv. 23. ‡ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

crown, but we an incorruptible *. This and every passage of scripture, which admonishes to *flee youthful lusts* †, they must frequently read and recollect and pray over, as the most powerful means to secure, and if they fall to recover themselves. For *wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? even by ruling himself after thy Word* ‡.

The other sort of pleasures, especially dangerous to young people, are gay amusements. Undoubtedly cheerfulness is as innocent, as it is amiable: it may and should be expressed by those that have it, and allowed and encouraged by those who have it not: for it both gives delight, and doth good. The disposition to it was unquestionably planted in us by our Maker, with intent that it should be gratified: and youth is plainly the natural season for it. But still, all this by no means exempts it from discipline and government. Suppose a constitution or a temper, by nature warm and choleric, should be industriously or negligently farther heated, instead of being watched and moderated, what would be the consequence? Suppose that gravity and wariness, which is as natural to old age, as gaiety to youth, should for that reason be carried on to its utmost extent: plainly that would be wrong. Surely then the contrary extreme is equally wrong. And indeed if we consider

* 1 Cor. ix. 25. † 2 Tim. ii. 22. ‡ Ps. cxix. 9.

der the make and circumstances of man, we shall soon discover many motives for keeping a strict hand upon our inclinations to all the several things which I have just mentioned.

Love of pleasure is undeniably one part of our nature: but sense of duty, and concern for lasting happiness, are as evident and much more important parts: yet we must often trample upon these, if we always follow that. Immoderate desires of present gratification, if we suffer them to be constantly soliciting us, will frequently prevail when they ought not; and hurry us on suddenly, or entice us gradually, to such lengths as we never intended; possibly till our heart is totally corrupted, and the care of our conduct entirely thrown aside. Witness the many examples of dispositions, that once promised better things, betrayed by indulgences merely indiscreet at first, into gross vices, and sometimes open dissoluteness. Now what ruins or impairs our virtue, is in proportion prejudicial to our happiness; even that present happiness, which the votaries of pleasure are pursuing. Not only reason proves this, if they would condescend to be reasoned with, but daily experience. How many have we all of us seen or heard of, who setting out with nothing worse than a thoughtless passion for diversion and entertainment, have grievously, nay perhaps irrecoverably, injured, in
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a few years, some their healths or fortunes, others their characters and peace of mind? and treasured up for the remainder of their days, pain and want, remorse and shame, it may be artfully palliated, but severely felt! Think then awhile, you that are young, and have pity on yourselves. Shall all this firm and vigorous strength, this affluence of circumstances, this ease of heart and openness of face, this delightful prospect of being esteemed and happy through the whole of life; shall it, merely for want of a little self-restraint, be cast away in the very entrance upon life, and exchanged for guilt and misery, to abide with you during the rest of it? For these are the natural fruits of such neglect: and it is the weakest vanity, to hope that you shall escape better than others, unless you keep safe upon firm ground.

Or suppose you come off ever so much better than you had cause to expect: still making pleasure your main business must hinder you, first from preparing for, then from attending to, the proper employments of your station: by which alone you must be great sufferers, and probably others besides you. But farther; indulging, and by indulgence, adding force to desires of this kind, spoils and vitiates the inward frame, just as feeding too freely on meats of high relish doth the bodily appetite. Com-
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mon food quickly becomes insipid: and in a little time we are surfeited of what pleased us most. Then follow sickly longings for we scarce know what: and the conclusion is abhorring and nauseating every thing. So it is with the mind. They who must always have somewhat extremely delicious to fill up their hours, reject as flat and tasteless a number of things, with which others are very well entertained. What they themselves were entertained with once, after a while grows cloying: and as the world is not formed to afford exquisite novelties frequently, they have miserable intervals of eager wishing for delight, which if they seem now and then to obtain, their satisfaction in them very soon deadens away to nothing. And thus they waste their days in the affectation of wonderful felicity, but in the real sufferings of most wearisome satiety and listlessness. Human nature is not fitted to support a perpetual flutter of jollity and mirth; which, like spirituous liquors, may appear at that instant to raise and enliven those who use them; but, generally speaking, will soon wear them out, and sink them down into a deplorable state of languor and lowness: from which, at length, the most pernicious augmentation of the dose will scarce afford them a moment's relief.

Therefore

Therefore be persuaded to look forward a little, and attend to consequences. Let the love of pleasure importune you ever so strongly; still, how delightful soever the draught is, to swallow it can never be all, that a thirsty person hath to consider. It must be a much more material question, whether no mischief will ensue. Mistake not the beginning of life for the whole. Providence in great wisdom hath furnished every period of it with proper satisfactions of its own, and proper employments for the service of the next. Youth is to prepare us for the comfortable enjoyment of manhood; manhood for that of old age; each part of our existence on earth for the blessedness of Heaven. Second the intention, pursue the direction of your gracious Maker; and be assured you will never find your account in contradicting it. You relish only such and such things at present; but provide for the feelings you will have hereafter; and, like those who are to travel through different climates, lay in for them all, what the knowing and prudent advise. Suppose in your childhood you had done whatever was then agreeable to you, and nothing else: how sad a figure must your youth have made! Why, just as contemptible and wretched will your riper age be, if you follow that rule now.

Or

Or could you escape all inconveniencies here from such behaviour; yet, as you cannot think this even a moral, much less a religious manner of life, you may be sure it must end ill hereafter. You were created, not merely to please yourselves, but to serve your fellow-creatures, and honour your Maker. You have faculties given you for these purposes; you are to account for the use of them. They are become by the fall of our first parents weak and insufficient; you have used them ill; and made your condition yet worse. A method of pardon and recovery is offered to you; but offered on terms of deep repentance, humble faith in a Redeemer, diligent care to preserve yourselves from sin, to improve yourselves in goodness: eternal rewards are promised to such as thus become qualified for them; eternal punishments are threatened to those who are *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God* *. Think well of this, and run mad after them if you can. *Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment* †. Solomon doth not forbid here all use of wordly gratifications, but all such use as we cannot answer for.

Therefore

* 2 Tim. iii. 4.

† Eccl. xi. 9.

Therefore allow yourselves in fit instances of pleasure, at fit seasons, to a fit degree ; and enjoy them with a merry heart : but never let the thought of living to pleasure get the least possession of you. Be industrious to check so absurd and destructive an imagination, by diligent application to some proper business, and fixing a frequent return of hours devoted to retired and serious recollection. The mere composure and quiet of them will be no small advantage to you : but you will find it a much greater, to stop from time to time and see whereabouts you are ; to consider whether you are fallen into no wrong course ; whether you make any progress in the right ; whether any danger be near, whether you are taking the best method to avoid it. No joy on earth can exceed that of answering these questions well. And if any thing be otherwise than well, knowing it, is the only way to amend it, and that the only way to inward peace : of which our gracious God and father is willing that they, who have most offended him, should on their sincere repentance and reformation immediately partake. Therefore often examine your own condition : and at such times also, turn off your eyes a little from the gay scenes of life, take the other parts of it into view, and consider on the whole, what this world is. A very different place, from what those who are intox-

icated with youthful warmth and sanguine expectations, for a while imagine it to be. Set therefore in your view the disappointments and perplexities, the cares and fatigues, the pains and sorrows, of which you amongst the rest of mankind must undergo your share: and while the appearance of things is brightest, as the wise King directs, *remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many* *. Not that you are to break your spirits or damp your activity, by melancholy prospects and apprehensions; but only to compose your hearts into a state suitable to that which you live in, and form your minds to be content with few and low enjoyments from the things around you: for in such a world as this, it is certain misery to aim at high happiness.

Still prudence may secure you a good degree of comfort here: and religion will exalt it into joy. For to the pious soul light will arise out of darkness; and all the vanity and vexation of the present life give assurance to those, who go through it as they ought, that God will make them ample amends in a better. Therefore in your hours of private meditation, fail not to renew the remembrance of your Creator; think of all you enjoy as his gift; think of all his laws as kind and necessary provisions

* Eccl. xi. 8.

provisions for your temporal or eternal welfare, think of every transgression as the grossest folly, mixed with the basest ingratitude; and have *Joseph's* reply in readiness for every temptation, *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God *?* Fervent devotion from a pure heart is undoubtedly the most pleasing of all employments: for it is the exercise of the sweetest affections, hope and love on the worthiest of objects; a Being infinitely able, and equally attentive, to reward our attachments to him, to defend us from every real evil, to bestow on us every real good, and in due time the full enjoyment of the supreme good, himself. Therefore warm but your hearts with these delightful sentiments; and you will never repine at any needful restraints from earthly gratifications. Only preserve in your piety itself that soberness of mind, which is requisite in every thing; that it may not fly out into raptures of enthusiasm, or zeal without charity; but may be uniformly rational, mild and beneficent.

This article of moderating their love of pleasure, is of such singular importance to the young, that I could not avoid enlarging upon it much more, than I shall on any of the rest.

II. A second instance, in which they have great need to be *sober-minded*, is their desire of imitating others, and doing many things in

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compliance

* Gen. xxxix. 9.

compliance with fashion, to which they would otherwise have no inclination. Now conforming to those around us in points of indifference, is one commendable part of social behaviour. And moderately absurd customs, if they be harmless, it is very allowable, when once they become general, to follow and despise at the same time. But if you catch yourselves growing really fond of such things, running to the utmost lengths of them, and building to yourselves a kind of reputation upon them; then it is high time to stop, indeed to retreat. For attending to trifles will take off, in proportion, your attention to matters of moment: and if your esteem be misplaced, your lives will be missed. But above all beware of yielding, where it may more immediately endanger your innocence: beware of that indifference to religion and religious duties, which of late hath appeared so peculiarly infectious; beware of being led insensibly into such a turn of talk and behaviour; such methods of employing your thoughts and your time, however polite they are accounted, as may weaken your regard to the principles of virtue. Always examine the rules of custom by those of God's word, of reason, and experience; and where you have cause to distrust your own judgment, adhere to that of prudent friends, if need were, against the world. But indeed it is generally

nerally a small part of the world, a few forward empty people, that make the high vogue in every thing, and are followed thoughtlessly by others. Be not deceived therefore by the self-sufficiency, noise, and vain shew of wretches like these; nor ever mistake their opinion for the sense of mankind: but be assured, many more will esteem you for right conduct, than wrong; and even the silent approbation of the wise and good will do you much more service, than the loudest applauses of the inconsiderate and the libertine. You may be afraid perhaps of the censure or ridicule of the latter: but only take care to be pious and regular without ostentation or founess, and by acquiring, as far as you can, every laudable accomplishment, to make amends for wanting; that of being wicked; and there will be small doubt of your receiving much better quarter from such, than they commonly give one another. At least, if you cannot *prevent* their scorn, surely you may stand against it, and despise it; or if your mind be too tender for that, as in some young people it is, you have another remedy, as obvious and easy as it is necessary; keep out of the way of hearing it. Allow the most agreeable persons, that would weaken your sense of duty, as little familiarity with you as ever you can; and strengthen yourselves in goodness continually, by the example, the countenance,

the encouragement, the advice of serious and discreet, and amiable companions.

3. A third thing which due sobriety of mind requires, especially of the young, is to avoid affectation : pretending and endeavouring without cause, to be what they are not, and to like or dislike what they naturally do not. While any thing continues in fashion, they beyond others, are hurried away by a strange desire of appearing much fonder of it, not only than there is ground to be, (which belongs to the last head) but than they really are : and often behave fillily, and sometimes wickedly, to express their passion for things, which at the bottom they have none for ; at least hardly any other, than what they took up, merely because they thought it looked well ; and can easily lay down again at the shortest warning, as experience shews, and be just as highly delighted with any thing else. Now plainly such as these prostitute their share of good sense to whatever happens to be the reigning folly. And there are too many others, who though perhaps very zealous against these publick affectations, have their private ones, to which they allow full scope. I am sensible, that matters of this nature may seem beneath the notice of this place : but nothing is so which produces real evils in life. It is very true, in young minds, as in warm and light soils, numbers of weeds will
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DUTIES OF THE YOUNG.

spring up. But if they are nursed and cherished, instead of being rooted out, they will exhaust the ground, and choak the good seed. Therefore examine whatever you perceive within you, rather with the greater care, for its being of your own growth: and never tolerate strong fancies, with weak reasons for them. Do not imagine things graceful, or important, or proper, without knowing why: or that you can ever make them so, if they are not so: or that any way whatever, of thinking, behaving, or appearing, is in the least the better for your adopting it. Some perhaps may for a while, injudiciously or artfully, applaud your peculiarities: they may procure you much notice, and seemingly of a favourable kind; but this will never end well. You will get a wrong bias, and lose the true notion of the value of things; will lay yourselves open to the designs of the crafty, fall into contempt with the discerning, and by degrees with every one. Youth indeed hath advantages, which may partly conceal, partly excuse these absurdities: but then they will fix upon you, and remain with you, after every thing that can palliate them is gone. You will have put on a character under a false notion of its becoming you, and not know how to lay it aside, even when it misbecomes you most notoriously. And if all affectation be thus bad, how dreadful is that monstrous af-

fection of prophaneness and vice, not uncommonly seen in persons who perhaps would like full as well to be pious and virtuous, if they could but believe it would make near so genteel a figure! but venture to believe, that a blameless conduct, though it will not raise so early, or so great a talk about you, will sooner or later distinguish you to your advantage, which nothing else can: or however the world may overlook you at present, God will do you abundant honour hereafter. *Whatsoever thou takest in hand, remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss* *.

4. The fourth particular comprehended under St. Paul's general direction for young people in the text, and the last that can be mentioned now, I shall express in his own words: *Not to think of themselves more highly than they ought to think, but to think soberly* †. Liveliness and want of experience peculiarly dispose them to err in this point: and the superficial education, the disregard to all authority, human or divine, and the liberty, and the practice of saying and doing what every one pleases, that prevail in the present age, have heightened and spread the error to degrees never known before. Hence they perpetually despise the most useful qualifications, and the worthiest behaviour: admire trifles, follies, and sins, as distinctions

* Eccclus. vii. 39.

† Rom. xii. 3.

tions and excellencies; claim a high merit for accomplishments of which they have little or no share; imagine themselves totally free from defects that are most glaringly visible in them; pity and scorn those whom they have more cause to envy: and thus, judging falsely, in the most dangerous manner of things and persons, others and themselves, are utterly misled in the main concerns of life. Yet they fail not to see, but take a pride in observing, from time to time, that this is the case of such and such of their acquaintance: now, would they but reflect, that it *may* be their own too, it would be no inconsiderable step towards a cure. It must put them on examining what advantages and good qualities they are really possessed of, what the real value of them is, what deductions are to be made from them on account of imperfections and failings, and what ground they have, on the whole, to hope for the esteem of wise men, and the acceptance of an all-wise God. It must remind them to consider over again the hasty judgments of their early days, and review, with a suspicious eye, perhaps many notions which they are very well satisfied in, without knowing why, and are proceeding to act upon at all adventures. Most people indeed should have more diffidence than they have, but the young much more than others.

It is not natural, it is not possible, that, in the very entrance of life, one who hath taken no pains to know any thing, should know every thing. And therefore when such are found, as they are every day, perfectly contented with themselves; absolutely clear, that their own way of thinking and acting, whatever it chances to be, is right; when they will venture, in questions of the greatest moment, to decide, without the least hesitation before-hand, or the least doubt afterwards, perhaps directly contrary to what the ablest persons in all ages have done; and hold every one in utter contempt, that can possibly be of another opinion; this is surely an astonishing want of sobriety of mind. At least be a little modest, till you can truly say, that you have considered and enquired with some care: for afterwards, in all likelihood, you will be so of course. Especially be modest, in proportion as any point is of consequence, and out of your reach. For instance in religion. The duties of it are plain, and plainly reasonable. So are the doctrines too, as far as we can understand them, and judge of them: but we can understand and judge of some of them but very imperfectly. They relate to the infinite nature of God, to the boundless views of his Providence, to future times, it may be a future world. No wonder, that of such things we do not comprehend the whole: though

though he may have good reasons, whether we perceive them or not, for telling us part : and yet, without comprehending the whole, some parts must seem unaccountable. Now such difficulties as these, or possibly less, a raw self-sufficient youth chances to think, or be told of, runs away with them, and derides the weakness of those who believe what they are taught. But can it possibly make any doctrine of religion doubtful, that persons bred up in the manner that, God knows too many are, and living afterwards as may be expected, do not understand it, or do not like it, or have heard more of the objections against it, than the arguments for it ? Or should they not rather learn to suspect, that they have not a sufficient acquaintance with the subject ? For what will become of good sense and right behaviour in the world, if people are to think themselves masters of every thing, which they know but any thing of, and to despise every thing they know nothing of ? This is both a very unreasonable and very immoral turn of mind : it destroys all reverence for truth, all attention to the virtuous conduct of their faculties and their lives : it leads them, for the most part, to early misery here, and hardens them beyond all things against that penitent conviction, which alone can prevent their misery hereafter. Justly therefore doth the prophet denounce : *Wo unto them that*
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call evil good, and good evil : that put darkness for light, and light for darkness. Wo unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.—Therefore, as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff : so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom go up as the dust ; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*

* Isa. v. 20, 21, 24.

ON THE
DUTIES *of the* YOUNG.

TIT. ii. 6.

Young Men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.

IN discoursing on these words, I have already mentioned four particulars, in respect of which it is peculiarly necessary for young persons to preserve sobriety of mind, and exercise a watchful government over themselves: their natural gaiety and love of pleasure, their fondness for imitating the customs and fashions of the world at some times, their proneness to affectation and wrong singularities at others, and their almost universal inclination to entertain too high an opinion of their own advantages, accomplishments, and abilities. Were this opinion to go no farther than their own breasts, it would be a great fault, and have very bad effects: but when it is shewn to others, and even demands their notice, the case becomes much worse. And therefore an
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additional indispensable duty, comprehended under the character of *sober-minded*, is,

5. That how well soever they may apprehend they see cause to think of themselves, they should behave with humility towards those with whom they have any intercourse: and remember, that in young people above all, modesty is exceedingly graceful, and a remarkable want of it shocking. It is not meant that they should be frightened, confused, and disconcerted in what they say or do before strangers and superiors: this would be a weakness; though, when it doth not go very far, an amiable one. Much less is it meant to enjoin so strict a silence or reserve, as may bring the goodness of their understandings or tempers in question: but only that their words, looks, and actions, should express a consciousness of what is very true, that they have reason, from their youth and inexperience, to be in some degree suspicious of themselves, even where they seem to be most plainly in the right. Still, what they are fully convinced, on deliberate consideration, is their duty, they must adhere to, so long as the persuasion continues; though persons, ever so much farther advanced in age or knowledge, dissuade them from it. But even in this case, and certainly then in others, they ought to shew every mark of due regard to those from whom they differ. And the most obliging submission is
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very consistent with liveliness and spirit: it may give strong proofs of dignity, at the same time with respect; and, by throwing the most advantageous light on every accomplishment, it will please every one worth pleasing, beyond all things.

It is very true, that quite different methods, a confident behaviour, and a manner in conversation, bold even to great lengths of indecency, seem to take with too many: even with some who cover their ignorance or neglect of true good breeding and politeness, with high pretences to both. But then, as the liking which they have, or pretend to have, for these undaunted spirits, can be accompanied with no real esteem, so it seldom holds long; and yet seldomer either produces or intends any good to those who are distinguished by it. For persons of judgment will by no means pitch on those for any purpose of importance, with whose empty forwardness they are most diverted for an idle hour. The very quality, that recommends them in this latter respect, is an insuperable objection against them in the former.

Another thing ought to be observed, which in our youth, at least, we commonly overlook; that they, who love to be often placing themselves in full view, whatever care they take about appearance, are apt to have more seen of them, than is to their advantage. And this danger

danger is the greater, as whoever desires too earnestly to make the best figure he can, will almost certainly be carried on to aim at making a better than he can, and of consequence will make a much worse than he need. Great numbers, who might have passed through life with abundantly sufficient approbation and regard, by the mere help of plain good sense and good temper, have, by affecting more agreeableness or sprightliness, more judgment or knowledge, perhaps than they had, or however than they had occasion to shew, become ridiculous to those whom they wanted to think highly of them. But a farther, and more serious evil is, that where the passion for being remarkable is permitted to grow very strong, if laudable methods will not bring it about, people are sorely tempted to use others: to procure admiration of their persons by improper arts and freedoms, of their learning by assertions of groundless novelties, of their wit by ill-nature or profaneness. And yet after all, generally speaking, these contrivances prove insufficient. Traps laid for applause, are almost always seen, and so disgust those who see them, that they often refuse even real merit its due acknowledgments, when they are too openly claimed. Now and then indeed these vain characters do push themselves into early reputation, without any title to it. But, as their hasty growth is
unaccompanied

unaccompanied with inward strength, after being a short time gazed at and envied, they are crushed under the weight of their own fame, and sink back into nothing; while every one rejoices at their fall, and wonders how they came ever to rise so high in the esteem of the world.

On all accounts therefore young men ought ever to express, in their whole conversation and demeanour, a moderate opinion and distrust of themselves; with no small esteem and deference for others, how far soever they may be from making a showy appearance. For still such persons may have a great deal more even of ornamental accomplishments, to produce on fit occasions, than you are aware of. Or supposing them not at all comparable to you in these respects, they may excel you in much more important things; in good conduct, virtue, and piety. Whatever advantages you have over any one besides these, remember it depends intirely on your use of them, whether you shall be the better or the worse for them; and be assured, they will never be truly beneficial to you, without humility of heart and behaviour. Instead therefore of the unprofitable and unsafe employment of admiring yourselves, and endeavouring to make others admire you, for qualities of small and doubtful value, indulge but a moderate complacence in the very
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66 A SERMON ON THE

best that you conceive you are possessed of; think how imperfect you are in them, how many others you want, how many bad ones you have; and far from cherishing the poor vanity of vying with those around you, prostrate yourselves before God, and earnestly beseech him to turn his face *from your sins, and put out all your misdeeds; to make you a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within you* *.

6. Another duty, comprehended under sobriety of mind, and closely connected with the former, consists in avoiding inconsiderate and vehement positiveness in discourse; to which the young, who think well of their own judgments, and know little of what others have judged or on what grounds, are much addicted. Now affirming any thing, as more certain than you have good cause to believe it, is really an offence against truth, though you should happen to be in the right; and peculiarly unbecoming in those, who are most likely to be often in the wrong. Insisting on a point too earnestly sometimes provokes very dangerous resentments, especially when two of the same warm temper are of different persuasions. And cooler and wiser men will seldom care to venture upon giving you information, when they see you so little disposed to receive it. For
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* Ps. li. 9, 10.

want of such monitors, you will often go on, for a long time, asserting as unquestionable what is false or doubtful. Others will perceive it soon: you will be forced to see it yourselves at last: and then what shame and vexation will you have brought upon your own heads! Whereas proposing your notions with an ingenuous diffidence will secure an easy retreat, if they chance to be confuted; and urging your reasons, when they are strongest, with modesty of speech, will make you beloved, as well as admired. You should therefore constantly bear in your thoughts, and imitate, the engaging behaviour of Elihu in Job; who, having first waited till his elders had spoken, *answered and said: I am young, and ye are old: wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you my opinion. I said, days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding; therefore hearken to me; I also will shew you my opinion*.*

7. A seventh instance of sobriety of mind, yet more important than the former, indeed so visibly important that a few words will suffice about it, is guarding carefully against rashness in conduct. Words may pass over, and prove of small importance; but actions are always of moment; and yet the young too commonly act

* Job xxxii. 6, 7, 8, 10.

act without scruple or distrust. Sometimes this arises from the pride of thinking, that they cannot act amiss : but sometimes also from mere thoughtlessness, or a lively impatience of deliberation, joined with that peculiar enterprising disposition, and unwillingness to believe any harm will follow, which youth inspires, and riper years find bitter reason to lament. For indeed what one thing is there dreadful in life, which this adventurous giddiness doth not frequently bring on men, in the very beginning of their days, and it may be fix down upon them to the end ? You, of all others, ought to be cautious : for you have much to lose, even in this world ; and to plunge at the first step into misery is a deplorable thing. You must be sensible, that multitudes have done so, and multitudes are doing so every day, through mere negligence, perhaps but a little negligence : and if you are guilty of as much or more, how can you hope to escape better ? It will cost you far less time and trouble to avoid errors, than to retrieve them. Some cannot be retrieved at all : others but imperfectly. With your best care you will find it hard enough to keep intirely clear of them : and what then must become of those, who professedly take no care at all, but give up their lives to fancy and chance ?

8. Another point in which it is very uncommon, and yet very needful for young people to
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be sober-minded, is, in moderating their natural hastiness of temper, and readiness to take offence. It is in vain to think of reckoning up all the occasions, on which this fault appears in them; but some ought to be mentioned particularly.

One is, that they are too commonly provoked at receiving advice, and resent it as an affront. Now if it be given, as it certainly is, for the most part, solely or chiefly from goodwill to you: what a monstrous, what a barbarous thing it is, to wound the hearts of your best friends doubly; first by your indiscretions, then by your ingratitude: to tell them, that is no concern of theirs, which they cannot help being most tenderly concerned about; and insist on the right you have, to ruin yourselves, if you please! But perhaps they take upon them, not only to advise you, but be angry with you: and that you cannot bear. Now it is very possible, their anger, or however the degree, or time, or manner of expressing it, may be improper: or, on the other hand, it may be more necessary, than you imagine, or care to own. But at least, it is a proof that they mean you well: else, why should they give themselves any disquiet about you? And even if they do mistake in some things, or go too far in their fears for you, still the reason of their solicitude is so kind, that the excess of
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it may well be excused. Or suppose it not to proceed from affection, but from what you will, conceit, censoriousness, hatred, if you please; it will be well worth your while, to attend to it so far however, as to make your advantage of it, by amending or vindicating or guarding yourself. And if they who give you good advice, be your enemies, it will be much better to grieve them by taking it, than to please them by persisting in sins or follies.

There is a farther instance of warmth of temper in young people, which frequently hath very bad consequences, though it proceeds from an excellent principle. They set out with the liveliest sense of right and wrong in many cases: would God it were the same in all! They have usually a strong abhorrence of doing unworthy things for the sake of interest: and it is great pity they have not an equal abhorrence of doing as unworthy things for the sake of pleasure and applause. But this aversion to baseness and unfairness, (though it can never be too deeply rooted, and to begin the world with indifference in these respects is a very bad sign,) yet, if they are naturally of eager spirits, hurries them on into most grievous errors. In publick affairs they grow hot-headed and outrageous; inattentive to the weight of those reasons, and the merit of those persons, that are against them; impatient to take the worst of methods,
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that promise but the attainment of their imagined good ends; in short, excessively unreasonable and injurious; and all with an intention of acting the honestest and noblest part that can be. In private life the same immoderate warmth prompts them to conceive sudden and furious antipathies on the slightest foundations: to magnify small faults, or none, into unpardonable crimes: and pursue the supposed offender with most unrighteous resentment, mistaking it all the while for just indignation. Now men of such vehement dispositions, which exert their vehemence chiefly in the season of youth, if they have any reflection, cannot help knowing their danger: and therefore should conscientiously and perpetually be on their watch against it: should think seriously in their cooler hours, how much the misrepresentations of others, how much more the violence of their own natures may disguise things to them; and it may be, have actually done it many times already: think what imperfections there are in the minds and behaviour, even of those who are well disposed, in their own among the rest: think, even supposing the things, or the persons they are angry with, very bad, whether the bitterness of their anger may not be as bad: think how much better and safer it is to lean towards the milder side; and how exceedingly blameable they will have been,

been, should all this heat, or a considerable part of it, prove at last to be groundless and unjust. But next to the danger of unreasonable aversions, ought to be mentioned,

9. That of unreasonable fondnesses : against which the young, if they will preserve a due sobriety of mind, must always be strictly on their guard. They have had little opportunity for, and therefore can have little skill in, a part of knowledge, that requires a great deal, judging of characters. And yet they will enter all at once into such bosom friendships with almost mere strangers, as a prudent person would scarce contract with those, whom he had known longest. Sometimes these sudden intimacies end in as sudden quarrels. And when they last longer, the case is often yet worse. The favourites, chosen so hastily are, for the most part, ill chosen : and when a confidence without reserve (for youth hath very little reserve) is placed in those, who either design, or only judge amiss ; in how many respects may they misguide, to what contempt may they expose, to what fatal errors may they lead their inconsiderate admirers ! Therefore beware of plausible insinuations and agreeable appearances : allow none to put themselves upon you for what they please ; but examine them well, and always consult your old and sure friends in the choice of new ones. Indeed if you never
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chuse any perhaps it may be no harm. Familiar acquaintance you may have with many. A proper degree of trust you may repose in some. But your life may pass, without meeting with one, to whom you can with safety open your heart intirely. And most of the pretended strict friendships are mere interested combinations in the elder, and a mixture of fond fancy and affectation in the younger. Therefore keep on the watch; and particularly against those, whom perhaps you are least apt to suspect, who express the most complaisance to you, and are the fullest of your praises, especially to your face. If this behaviour be owing to weakness, they are unworthy of your esteem: if to design, they are dangerous. For the scripture hath said, *a man that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a net for his feet* *. Instead therefore of running into the arms of such, keep them at a distance. And with whomsoever you enter into a closer connexion, continue still to observe, with candor indeed, but with vigilance too, how they conduct themselves, what impressions they are making upon you: nor think it any breach either of fidelity or good-nature, to part with the dearest friend upon earth, rather than endanger your piety, your happiness, or even your character. Far-

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* Prov. xxix. 5.

ther yet; carefully avoid the weakness and injustice of extolling your intimates too highly, either in your discourse or even your imagination, and disparaging others in comparison: but still more carefully avoid promoting their interests in opposition to reason and equity, to private right or public good.

10. Another part of sobriety of mind, highly and peculiarly requisite for the young, is a discreet management of their expences. Covetousness indeed, hateful and despicable as it is in the elder, would be somewhat worse in them; but all is not covetousness, that they are apt to call so: and extravagance is a mark only of folly, not of generosity, or good-nature. They who squander needlessly at some times, will be driven to spare improperly at others, when they should have been bountiful: and so will make a truly mean figure, because they would needs make a falsely great one. Then, if their profuseness rise to any height, it creates them great uneasiness with their parents and friends: whom it always fills with fears about them, and frequently straitens and distresses: it occasions (as they must run in debt) difficulties and losses, oftentimes ruin, to those, with whom they have dealings; and usually to such of them, as deserve it least: they must bring themselves into continual perplexities: they will of course be tempted, either to drown the
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sense of them by intemperance, or to aim at getting out of them by dishonest arts and methods, of one kind or another ; yet probably in vain. And if they come to have families, they will in all likelihood utterly undo those, who ought to have been the object of their tenderest love and care. Remember therefore to set out cautiously : consider well, that to rise in your way of living is very easy ; but to lower it, one of the hardest things in the world : and lay it down for a rule, that no income whatever can support negligence and expensiveness.

11. The eleventh proof, which young persons should give of a sober and reasonable mind is to fix upon, and keep closely to, some fit manner of spending their time. For none of it is given us to be thrown away : and unless they apply early to what they ought, a habit of idleness will soon take firm possession of them. To those of lower rank, necessity reads the daily lesson of industry : it will make their condition comfortable and reputable : and if they think of being maintained at their ease, they are infallibly ruined, body and soul. But whatever rank we are of ; without some employment, life must be tedious : and unless proper employment be chosen to fill up the empty spaces of it, gross imprudences and sins will be crowding in upon them. Or if the idle could avoid these, yet surely it is bad enough, that they cannot

avoid making a despicable figure in the world ; that their inattention, which will gradually produce an incapacity of conducting their own affairs, must subject them to an absolute dependance upon others, who may impose upon them without fear, to their great prejudice, in more ways than one. And besides, how painful will the reflection be to you, (if ever you have any reflection) what happy circumstances you might have been in, what an honourable appearance you might have made, had it not been for this contemptible quality ! But a still more alarming thought is, that those abilities and opportunities of improving yourselves, and being useful to your fellow creatures, which God had bestowed on you, he will hereafter call you to answer for ; and he hath warned you before hand, that *the unprofitable and slothful servant, who hath hid his talent in the earth, shall be cast into outer darkness* *.

All people therefore, and the young especially, should keep themselves, not only employed, but employed to good purpose. Both their friends and they should be very careful, not to direct their aim to a wrong point ; for there are unhappy mistakes of this kind. Such things are frequently made the study and business of life, as those who employ themselves
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* Matth. xxv. 25, 26, 30.

in them had much better know nothing of ; at least can be little the better for knowing ever so well. But they take up a groundless fancy of their own, or follow a weak judgment or silly example of another ; set their whole hearts on gaining a reputation in some arrant trifle ; and so, with great pains, become very accomplished, and good for nothing. Not that slighter accomplishments, if they be real and suitable to our situation, are to be overlooked : or beginners in life to be severely blamed, if they do place a little higher value on such matters than they deserve. But much care should be taken by those about them, and still more by themselves, (for who is so nearly interested ?) that occupations of mere amusement do not fill up too much of their thoughts or time. Perhaps they are very innocent, perhaps they are very elegant : and therefore even the well-disposed, among others, indulge their inclinations for them without scruple. But still there is an essential difference between things of entertainment only, and things of use : and young people should be formed, as soon as possible, to attend to this difference ; and should always remember, that the subjects for their minds to dwell upon, the employments for their days to be spent in, are partly the particular ones, that belong to the several situations, in which they

are now, or probably will be placed ; partly the general ones, of improving their understandings in proper knowledge, but above all their hearts in the love of God and their duty : and to throw away life upon other pursuits to the prejudice of these, is not only an imprudence, productive of great inconveniencies in this world ; but a sin, justly liable to punishment in another.

12. And lastly, one instance more of sobriety of mind, which ought to be sacredly regarded by the young, is preserving and expressing a due esteem and reverence of such as are farther advanced in years. It is true, the natural temper of the two extremes of life is very different : but Providence hath kindly mixed them together in society, for mutual benefit. Undoubtedly the aged are subject to imperfections and faults ; yet probably you often accuse them unjustly, or if not, have not you imperfections and faults too, upon the whole more justly disagreeable to them, than theirs are to you ? Still these ought not to hinder you from being loved : nor should those hinder them from being respected. They should interpret candidly the fallies of your inconsiderateness : and you in return, should pass over the little failures in point of temper, which infirmities may render very excuseable in them ; and bear with the restraints of possibly too great caution, parsimony

mony and regularity; though in general their long experience must have made them better judges of these points, than you are as yet. But indeed it will for the most part be in your own power, to take off these restraints from yourselves in a great measure, if not entirely. Check but that levity, which raises in them suspicions of you; behave so, that you may safely be trusted; and endeavour to be agreeable to them, as they do continually to be useful to you: and all will be well. Your sprightliness and gay humour was unquestionably designed in some degree to comfort and enliven their declining age. Be not unwilling therefore to spend some share of it that way: but bestow a little of your chearfulness upon them, in the season when you have plenty of it, and you will give them a great deal of pleasure, when they want it very much. It is a truly good natured part to do so. It is a proper gratitude for the many kindnesses and advantages, which all young people have received from their friends of riper years. And they may make you large amends for it, often in your worldly interests, but almost constantly in such information and direction, as will do you more service, than all your agreeableness can afford them delight. Probably it is not long, that they may continue with you. Study to profit as much as you can by them, before you are left

to yourselves; and give them such a prospect of your doing well, that they may quit the world with comfort. In every common art and business, you shew great regard to experienced instructors: and can they fail to be of proportionable use in the science of conducting life, the most important and most difficult of all others? Besides, the respect, which you are now perhaps unwilling to pay, you will in time be very uneasy, if you do not receive. Therefore preserve a rule of behaviour, that you will one day find your own account in; and suffer it not, by your fault, to be lost out of the world in the mean while.

I have now gone through my design. If in the prosecution of it, I have urged motives of a temporal, as well as a spiritual nature, so hath the scripture in a multitude of places. And if, together with greater duties, I have recommended some of less moment; and, amongst other faults, cautioned against several, which may commonly be thought not to amount to sins; yet whoever hath a just concern for those, who are setting out upon the journey of life, will think they need very useful admonition for the way. And it is highly requisite that all persons, especially all young persons, should cherish, even in smaller instances, that soberness and righteousness of mind which else will soon be neglected in more important

DUTIES OF THE YOUNG. 81

portant matters: following conscientiously that injunction of the Apostle, with which I conclude. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ;—These things do : and the God of peace shall be with you **.

* Phil. iv. 8, 9.

B L A I R ' s
S E R M O N
O N T H E
DUTIES *of the* YOUNG.

TIT. ii. 6.

*Young Men likewise exhort to be sober-
minded.*



ON THE
DUTIES *of the* YOUNG.

TIT. ii. 6.

Young Men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.

SOBRIETY of mind, is one of those virtues which the present condition of human life strongly inculcates. The uncertainty of its enjoyments checks presumption; the multiplicity of its dangers, demands perpetual caution. Moderation, vigilance, and self-government, are duties incumbent on all; but especially on such as are beginning the journey of life. To them, therefore, the admonition in the Text is, with great propriety, directed; though there is reason to fear, that by them it is in hazard of being least regarded. Experience enforces the admonition on the most giddy, after they have advanced in years. But the whole state of youthful views and passions, is adverse to sobriety of mind. The scenes which present themselves, at our entering up-
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on the world, are commonly flattering. Whatever they be in themselves, the lively spirits of the young gild every opening prospect. The field of hope appears to stretch wide before them. Pleasure seems to put forth its blossoms on every side. Impelled by desire, forward they rush with inconsiderate ardour: Prompt to decide, and to choose; averse to hesitate, or to enquire; credulous, because untaught by experience; rash, because unacquainted with danger; head-strong, because unsubdued by disappointment. Hence arise the perils, of which it is my design at present to warn them. I shall take *sobriety of mind*, in its most comprehensive sense, as including the whole of that discipline which religion and virtue prescribe to youth. Though the words of the Text are directly addressed to *young men*, yet, as the same admonition is given in a preceding verse to the other sex, the instructions which arise from the Text, are to be considered as common to both. I intend first to show them the importance of beginning early to give serious attention to their conduct; and next, to point out those virtues which they ought chiefly to cultivate.

As soon as you are capable of reflection, you must perceive that there is a right and a wrong, in human actions. You see that those who are born with the same advantages of fortune, are not all equally prosperous in the course of life.

While

While some of them, by wise and steady conduct, attain distinction in the world, and pass their days with comfort and honour; others of the same rank, by mean and vicious behaviour, forfeit the advantages of their birth, involve themselves in much misery, and end in being a disgrace to their friends, and a burden on society. Early, then, you may learn, that it is not on the external condition in which you find yourselves placed, but on the part which you are to act, that your welfare or unhappiness, your honour or infamy, depend. Now, when beginning to act that part, what can be of greater moment, than to regulate your plan of conduct, with the most serious attention, before you have yet committed any fatal or irretrievable errors? If, instead of exerting reflection for this valuable purpose, you deliver yourselves up, at so critical a time, to sloth and pleasure; if you refuse to listen to any counsellor but humour, or to attend to any pursuit except that of amusement; if you allow yourselves to float loose and careless on the tide of life, ready to receive any direction which the current of fashion may chance to give you; what can you expect to follow from such beginnings? While so many around you are undergoing the sad consequences of a like indiscretion, for what reason shall not those consequences extend to you? Shall you only
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attain success without that preparation, and escape dangers without that precaution, which is required of others? Shall happiness grow up to you, of its own accord, and solicit your acceptance, when, to the rest of mankind, it is the fruit of long cultivation, and the acquisition of labour and care?—Deceive not yourselves with such arrogant hopes. Whatever be your rank, Providence will not for your sake, reverse its established order. The Author of your being hath enjoined you to *take heed to your ways; to ponder the paths of your feet; to remember your Creator in the days of your youth.* He hath decreed, that they only *who seek after wisdom shall find it; that fools shall be afflicted, because of their transgressions; and that whose refuseth instruction, shall destroy his own soul.* By listening to these admonitions, and tempering the vivacity of youth with a proper mixture of serious thought, you may ensure cheerfulness for the rest of life; but by delivering yourselves up at present to giddiness and levity, you lay the foundation of lasting heaviness of heart.

When you look forward to those plans of life, which either your circumstances have suggested, or your friends have proposed, you will not hesitate to acknowledge, that in order to pursue them with advantage, some previous discipline is requisite. Be assured, that what-
ever

ever is to be your profession, no education is more necessary to your success, than the acquirement of virtuous dispositions and habits. This is the universal preparation for every character, and every station in life. Bad as the world is, respect is always paid to virtue. In the usual course of human affairs, it will be found, that a plain understanding joined with acknowledged worth, contributes more to prosperity, than the brightest parts without probity or honour. Whether science, or business, or public life, be your aim, virtue still enters, for a principal share, into all those great departments of society. It is connected with eminence, in every liberal art; with reputation, in every branch of fair and useful business; with distinction, in every public station. The vigour which it gives the mind, and the weight which it adds to character; the generous sentiments which it breathes, the undaunted spirit which it inspires, the ardour of diligence which it quickens, the freedom which it procures from pernicious and dishonourable avocations, are the foundations of all that is high in fame, or great in success, among men.

Whatever ornamental or engaging endowments you now possess, virtue is a necessary requisite, in order to their shining with proper lustre. Feeble are the attractions of the fairest

est form, if it be suspected, that nothing within corresponds to the pleasing appearance without. Short are the triumphs of wit, when it is supposed to be the vehicle of malice. By whatever arts you may at first attract the attention, you can hold the esteem, and secure the hearts of others, only by amiable dispositions, and the accomplishments of the mind. These are the qualities whose influence will last, when the lustre of all that once sparkled and dazzled has passed away.

Let not then the season of youth be barren of improvements so essential to your future felicity and honour. Now is the seed-time of life: and according to *what you sow, you shall reap*. Your character is now, under Divine assistance, of your own forming; your fate is, in some measure, put into your own hands. Your nature is as yet pliant and soft. Habits have not established their dominion. Prejudices have not pre-occupied your understanding. The world has not had time to contract and debase your affections. All your powers are more vigorous, disembarrassed, and free, than they will be at any future period. Whatever impulse you now give to your desires and passions, the direction is likely to continue. It will form the channel in which your life is to run; nay, it may determine its everlasting issue. Consider then the employment of this
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important period, as the highest trust which shall ever be committed to you ; as, in a great measure, decisive of your happiness, in time, and in eternity. As in the succession of the seasons, each, by the invariable laws of nature, affects the productions of what is next in course ; so in human life, every period of our age, according as it is well or ill spent, influences the happiness of that which is to follow. Virtuous youth gradually brings forward accomplished and flourishing manhood ; and such manhood passes of itself, without uneasiness, into respectable and tranquil old age. But when nature is turned out of its regular course, disorder takes place in the moral, just as in the vegetable world. If the spring put forth no blossoms, in summer there will be no beauty, and in autumn no fruit. So, if youth be trifled away without improvement, manhood will be contemptible ; and old age miserable. If the beginnings of life have been *vanity*, its latter end can be no other than *vexation of spirit*.

Having thus shown the importance of beginning early to give serious attention to conduct, I come next, to point out the virtues which are most necessary to be cultivated in youth. What I shall,

I. Recommend, is piety to God. With this I begin, both as the foundation of good morals,

als, and as a disposition particularly graceful and becoming in youth. To be void of it, argues a cold heart, destitute of some of the best affections which belong to that age. Youth is the season of warm and generous emotions. The heart should then, spontaneously, rise into the admiration of what is great, glow with the love of what is fair and excellent, and melt at the discovery of tenderness and goodness. Where can any object be found, so proper to kindle those affections, as the Father of the universe, and the Author of all felicity? Unmoved by veneration, can you contemplate that grandeur and majesty, which his works every where display? Untouched by gratitude, can you view that profusion of good, which, in this pleasing season of life, his beneficent hand pours around you? Happy in the love and affection of those with whom you are connected, look up to the Supreme Being, as the inspirer of all the friendship which has ever been shewn you by others; himself, your best and your first friend; formerly the supporter of your infancy, and the guide of your childhood; now the guardian of your youth, and the hope of your coming years. View religious homage, as a natural expression of gratitude to him for all his goodness. Consider it as the service of the *God of your fathers*; of him, to whom your parents devoted you; of him, whom
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in former ages your ancestors honoured ; and by whom they are now rewarded, and blessed in Heaven. Connected with so many tender sensibilities of soul, let religion be with you, not the cold and barren offspring of speculation, but the warm and vigorous dictate of the heart.

But though piety chiefly belong to the heart, yet the aid of the understanding is requisite, to give a proper direction to the devout affections. You must endeavour, therefore, to acquire just views, both of the great principles of natural religion, and of the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. For this end, study the sacred scriptures. Consult the word of God, more than the systems of men, if you would know the truth in its native purity. When, upon rational and sober enquiry, you have established your principles, suffer them not to be shaken by the scoffs of the licentious, or the cavils of the sceptical. Remember, that in the examination of every great and comprehensive plan, such as that of Christianity, difficulties may be expected to occur ; and that reasonable evidence is not to be rejected, because the nature of our present state allows us only to *know in part, and to see through a glass darkly.*

Impress your minds with reverence for all that is sacred. Let no wantonness of youthful spirits, no compliance with the intemperate mirth

mirth of others, ever betray you into profane fallies. Besides the guilt which is hereby incurred, nothing gives a more odious appearance of petulance and presumption to youth, than the affectation of treating religion with levity. Instead of being an evidence of superior understanding, it discovers a pert and shallow mind; which vain of the first smatterings of knowledge, presumes to make light of what the rest of mankind revere.

At the same time, you are not to imagine, that when exhorted to be religious, you are called upon, to become more formal and solemn in your manners than others of the same years, or to erect yourselves into supercilious reprovers of those around you. The spirit of true religion breathes gentleness and affability. It gives a native, unaffected ease to the behaviour. It is social, kind, and cheerful: far removed from that gloomy and illiberal superstition which clouds the brow, sharpens the temper, dejects the spirit, and teaches men to fit themselves for another world, by neglecting the concerns of this. Let your religion, on the contrary, connect preparation for Heaven, with an honourable discharge of the duties of active life. Let it be associated in your imagination, with all that is manly and useful; *with whatsoever things are true, are just, are pure, are lovely, are of good report, wherever there is any virtue, and* where-

wherever there is *any praise*. Of such religion discover, on every proper occasion, that you are not ashamed ; but avoid making any unnecessary ostentation of it before the world.

II. To piety, join modesty and docility, reverence of your parents, and submission to those who are your superiours in knowledge, in station, and in years. Dependence and obedience belong to youth. Modesty is one of its chief ornaments ; and has ever been esteemed a presage of rising merit. When entering on the career of life, it is your part, not to assume the reins as yet into your hands ; but to commit yourselves to the guidance of the more experienced, and to become wise by the wisdom of those who have gone before you.

Of all the follies incident to youth, there are none which either deform its present appearance, or blast the prospect of its future prosperity, more than self-conceit, presumption and obstinacy. By checking its natural progress in improvement, they fix it on long immaturity ; and frequently produce mischiefs, which can never be repaired. Yet these are vices too commonly found among the young. Big with enterprise, and elated by hope, they resolve to trust with success to none but themselves. Full of their own abilities, they deride the admonitions which are given them by their friends,

friends, as the timorous suggestions of age. Too wise to learn, too impatient to deliberate, too forward to be restrained, they plunge with precipitant indiscretion, into the midst of all the dangers with which life abounds. *Seest thou a young man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him.*—Positive as you now are in your opinions, and confident in your assertions, be assured, that the time approaches, when both men and things will appear to you in a different light. Many characters which you now admire, will, by and by, sink in your esteem; and many opinions, of which you are at present most tenacious, will alter as you advance in years. Distrust therefore, that glare of youthful presumption, which dazzles your eyes. Abound not in your own sense. Put not yourselves forward with too much eagerness; nor imagine, that by the impetuosity of juvenile ardour, you can overturn systems which have been long established, and change the face of the world. *Learn not to think more highly of yourselves than you ought to think, but to think soberly.* By patient and gradual progression in improvement, you may in due time, command lasting esteem. But by assuming at present, a tone of superiority, to which you have no title, you will disgust those whose approbation it is most important to gain. Forward vivacity may fit you to be the companions

nions of an idle hour. More solid qualities must recommend you to the wise, and mark you out for importance and consideration in subsequent life.

III. It is necessary to recommend to you, sincerity and truth. This is the basis of every virtue. That darkness of character, where we can see no heart; those foldings of art, through which no native affection is allowed to penetrate, present an object, unamiable in every season of life, but particularly odious in youth. If, at an age when the heart is warm, when the emotions are strong, and when nature is expected to show itself free and open, you can already smile and deceive, what are we to look for, when you shall be longer hackneyed in the ways of men; when interest shall have completed the obduration of your heart, and experience shall have improved you in all the arts of guile? Dissimulation in youth, is the fore-runner of perfidy in old age. Its first appearance is the fatal omen of growing depravity, and future shame. It degrades parts and learning; obscures the lustre of every accomplishment; and sinks you into contempt with God, and man.

As you value therefore, the approbation of Heaven, or the esteem of the world, cultivate the love of truth. In all your proceedings, be direct and consistent. Ingenuity and candour

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possess the most powerful charm; they bespeak universal favour, and carry an apology for almost every failing. *The lip of truth shall be established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment* *. The path of truth is a plain and a safe path; that of falsehood is a perplexing maze. After the first departure from sincerity, it is not in your power to stop. One article unavoidably leads on to another; till as the intricacy of the labyrinth encreases, you are left entangled in your own snare. Deceit discovers a little mind, which stops at temporary expedients, without rising to comprehensive views of conduct. It betrays at the same time, a dastardly spirit. It is the resource of one, who wants courage to avow his designs, or to rest upon himself. Whereas openness of character displays that generous boldness, which ought to distinguish youth. To set out in the world with no other principle than a crafty attention to interest, betokens one who is destined for creeping through the inferior walks of life. But to give an early preference to honour above gain, when they stand in competition; to despise every advantage, which cannot be attained without dishonest arts; to brook no meanness, and to stoop to no dissimulation; are the indications of a great mind,
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* P. cv. xii. 19.

the presages of future eminence and distinction in life.

At the same time, this virtuous sincerity is perfectly consistent with the most prudent vigilance and caution. It is opposed to cunning, not to true wisdom. It is not the simplicity of a weak and improvident, but the candour of an enlarged and noble mind; of one who scorns deceit, because he accounts it both base and unprofitable; and who seeks no disguise, because he needs none to hide him. *Lord! who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall ascend into thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.*

IV. Youth is the proper season of cultivating the benevolent and humane affections. As a great part of your happiness is to depend on the connections which you form with others, it is of high importance that you acquire, betimes, the temper and the manners which will render such connections comfortable. Let a sense of justice be the foundation of all your social qualities. In your most early intercourse with the world, and even in your youthful amusements, let no unfairness be found. Engrave on your mind that sacred rule, of *doing in all things to others, according as you wish that they should do unto you.* For this end, impress yourselves with a deep sense of the original,

and natural, equality of men. Whatever advantages of birth and fortune you possess, never display them with an ostentatious superiority. Leave the subordinations of rank, to regulate the intercourse of more advanced years. At present, it becomes you to act among your companions, as man with man. Remember how unknown to you are the vicissitudes of the world; and how often they, on whom ignorant and contemptuous young men once looked down with scorn, have risen to be their superiors in future years.

Compassion is an emotion, of which you ought never to be ashamed. Graceful in youth is the tear of sympathy, and the heart that melts at the tale of woe. Let not ease and indulgence contract your affections, and wrap you up in selfish enjoyment. But go sometimes to the *house of mourning*, as well as to the *house of feasting*. Accustom yourselves to think of the distresses of human life; of the solitary cottage, the dying parent; and the weeping orphan. *Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt surely give unto him in the day of his need: And thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because that for this thing, the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works*.* Never sport with pain and distress, in any of your amusements;

* Deut. xv. 7, 10.

amusements ; nor treat even the meanest insect, with wanton cruelty.

In young minds, there is commonly a strong propensity to particular intimacies and friendships. Youth, indeed, is the season when friendships are sometimes formed, which not only continue through succeeding life, but which glow to the last, with a tenderness unknown to the connections begun in cooler years. The propensity therefore is not to be discouraged ; though at the same time it must be regulated with much circumspection and care. Too many of the pretended friendships of youth, are mere combinations in pleasure. They are often founded on capricious likings ; suddenly contracted, and as suddenly dissolved. Sometimes they are the effect of interested complaisance and flattery on one side, and of credulous fondness on the other. Beware of such rash and dangerous connections, which may afterwards load you with dishonour. Remember that by the character of those whom you choose for your friends, your own is likely to be formed, and will certainly be judged of by the world. Be slow, therefore, and cautious in contracting intimacy ; but when a virtuous friendship is once established, consider it as a sacred engagement. Expose not yourselves to the reproach of lightness and inconstancy, which always bespeak, either a trifling

or a base mind. Reveal none of the secrets of your friend. Be faithful to his interests. Forsake him not in danger. Abhor the thought of acquiring any advantage by his prejudice or hurt. *There is a friend that loveth at all times, and a brother that is born for adversity. Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not* *.

Finally, on this head, in order to render yourselves amiable in society, correct every appearance of harshness in behaviour. Let that courtesy distinguish your demeanour, which springs, not so much from studied politeness, as from a mild and gentle heart. Follow the customs of the world in matters indifferent; but stop when they become sinful. Let your manners be simple and natural; and of course they will be engaging. Affectation is certain deformity. By forming themselves on fantastic models, and vying with one another in every reigning folly, the young begin with being ridiculous, and end in being vicious and immoral.

V. Let me particularly exhort youth to temperance in pleasure: Let me admonish them to beware of that rock on which thousands, from race to race, continue to split. The love of pleasure, natural to man in every period of his life, glows at this age with excessive ardour.

Novelty

* Prov. xvii. 17. — xxvii. 10.

Novelty adds fresh charms, as yet, to every gratification. The world appears to spread a continual feast; and health, vigour, and high spirits, invite them to partake of it without restraint. In vain we warn them of latent dangers. Religion is accused of insufferable severity, in prohibiting enjoyment; and the old, when they offer their admonitions, are upbraided with having forgot that they once were young.—And yet, my friends, to what do the restraints of religion, and the counsels of age, with respect to pleasure, amount? They may all be comprized in few words, not to hurt yourselves, and not to hurt others, by your pursuit of pleasure. Within these bounds, pleasure is lawful; beyond them it becomes criminal, because it is ruinous. Are these restraints any other, than what a wise man would choose to impose on himself? We call you not to renounce pleasure, but to enjoy it in safety. Instead of abridging it, we exhort you to pursue it on an extensive plan. We propose measures for securing its possession, and for prolonging its duration.

Consult your whole nature. Consider yourselves not only as sensitive, but as rational beings; not only as rational but social, not only as social but immortal. Whatever violates your nature in any of these respects, cannot afford true pleasure; any more than that which undermines an essential part of the

vital system, can promote health. For the truth of this conclusion we appeal, not merely to the authority of religion, nor to the testimony of the aged, but to yourselves and your own experience. We ask, Whether you have not found that in a course of criminal excess, your pleasure was more than compensated by succeeding pain? Whether, if not from every particular instance, yet from every habit, at least, of unlawful gratification, there did not spring some thorn to wound you, there did not arise some consequence to make you repent of it in the issue? *How long then, ye simple ones! will ye love simplicity? How long repeat the same round of pernicious folly, and tamely expose yourselves to be caught in the same snare? If you have any consideration, or any firmness left, avoid temptations, for which you have found yourselves unequal, with as much care, as you would shun pestilential infection. Break off all connections with the loose and profligate. When sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Look not on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup; for at the last, it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Remove thy way from the strange woman, and come not near the door of her house. Let not thine heart decline to her ways; for her house is the way to hell. Thou goest after her as a bird hasteneth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life.*

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By these unhappy excesses of irregular pleasure in youth, how many amiable dispositions are corrupted or destroyed ! How many rising capacities and powers are suppressed ! How many flattering hopes of parents and friends, are totally extinguished ! Who but must drop a tear over human nature, when he beholds that morning which arose so bright, overcast with such untimely darkness ; that good humour which once captivated all hearts, that vivacity which sparkled in every company, those abilities which were fitted for adorning the highest station, all sacrificed at the shrine of low sensuality ; and one who was formed for running the fair career of life in the midst of public esteem, cut off by his vices at the beginning of his course, or sunk, for the whole of it, into insignificance and contempt ! These, O sinful Pleasure ! are thy trophies. It is thus that, co-operating with the foe of God and man, thou degradest human honour, and blindest the opening prospects of human felicity.

VI. Diligence, industry, and proper improvement of time are material duties of the young. To no purpose are they endowed with the best abilities, if they want activity for exerting them. Unavailing, in this case, will be every direction that can be given them, either for their temporal or spiritual welfare. In youth, the habits of industry are most easily

acquired. In youth the incentives to it are strongest, from ambition and from duty, from emulation and hope, from all the prospects which the beginning of life affords. If, dead to these calls, you already languish in slothful inaction, what will be able to quicken the more sluggish current of advancing years?

Industry is not only the instrument of improvement, but the foundation of pleasure. Nothing is so opposite to the true enjoyment of life, as the relaxed and feeble state of an indolent mind. He who is a stranger to industry, may possess, but he cannot enjoy. For it is labour only which gives the relish to pleasure. It is the appointed vehicle of every good to man. It is the indispensable condition of our possessing a sound mind, in a sound body. Sloth is so inconsistent with both, that it is hard to determine whether it be a greater foe to virtue, or to health and happiness. Inactive as it is in itself, its effects are fatally powerful. Though it appear a slowly flowing stream, yet it undermines all that is stable and flourishing. It not only saps the foundation of every virtue, but pours upon you a deluge of crimes and evils. It is like water which first purifies by stagnation, and then sends up noxious vapours, and fills the atmosphere with death.

Fly, therefore, from idleness as the certain parent both of guilt and of ruin. And under
idleness

idleness I include, not mere inaction only, but all that circle of trifling occupations, in which too many saunter away their youth; perpetually engaged in frivolous society, or public amusements, in the labours of dress, or the ostentation of their persons.—Is this the foundation which you lay for future usefulness and esteem? By such accomplishments, do you hope to recommend yourselves to the thinking part of the world, and to answer the expectations of your friends, and your country?—Amusements, youth requires. It were vain, it were cruel to prohibit them. But though allowable as the relaxation, they are most culpable as the business of the young. For they then become the gulph of time, and the poison of the mind. They foment bad passions. They weaken the manly powers. They sink the native vigour of youth, into contemptible effeminacy.

Redeeming your time from such dangerous waste, seek to fill it with employments which you may review with satisfaction. The acquisition of knowledge is one of the most honourable occupations of youth. The desire of it discovers a liberal mind, and is connected with many accomplishments, and many virtues. But though your train of life should not lead you to study, the course of education always furnishes proper employments to a well disposed mind.

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Whatever you pursue, be emulous to excel. Generous ambition, and sensibility to praise, are, especially at your age, among the marks of virtue. Think not that any affluence of fortune, or any elevation of rank, exempts you from the duties of application and industry. Industry is the law of our being; it is the demand of nature, of reason, and of God. Remember always, that the years which now pass over your heads, leave permanent memorials behind them. From your thoughtless minds they may escape; but they remain in the remembrance of God. They form an important part of the register of your life. They will hereafter bear testimony either for or against you, at that day, when for all your actions, but particularly for the employments of youth, you must give an account to God.

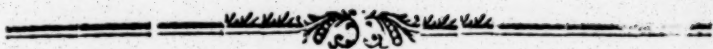
Thus I have set before you, some of the chief qualifications which belong to that *sober mind*, that virtuous and religious character, which the Apostle in my text recommends to youth; piety, modesty, truth, benevolence, temperance and industry. Whether your future course is destined to be long or short, after this manner it should commence; and if it continue to be thus conducted, its conclusion, at what time soever it arrives, will not be inglorious or unhappy. For, *honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, or that which*

which is measured by number of years. But wisdom is the gray hair to man, and an unspotted life is old age.

Let me finish the subject, with recalling your attention to that dependance on the blessing of Heaven, which, amidst all your endeavours after improvement, you ought continually to preserve. It is too common with the young, even when they resolve to tread the path of virtue and honour, to set out with presumptuous confidence in themselves. Trusting to their own abilities for carrying them successfully through life, they are careless of applying to God, or of deriving any assistance from what they are apt to reckon the gloomy discipline of religion. Alas! how little do they know the dangers which await them? Neither human wisdom, nor human virtue, unsupported by religion, are equal for the trying situations which often occur in life. By the shock of temptation, how frequently have the most virtuous intentions been overthrown? Under the pressure of disaster, how often has the greatest constancy sunk? *Every good and every perfect gift is from above.* Wisdom and virtue, as well as *riches and honour, come from God.* Destitute of his favour, you are in no better situation, with all your boasted abilities, than orphans left to wander in a trackless desert, without any guide to conduct them, or any
shelter

shelter to cover them from the gathering storm. Correct, then, this ill-founded arrogance. Expect not, that your happiness can be independent of him who made youth. By faith and repentance, apply to the redeemer of the world. By piety and prayer, seek the protection of the God of Heaven. I conclude with the solemn words, in which a great Prince delivered his dying charge to his son; words, which every young person ought to consider as addressed to himself, and to engrave deeply on his heart *Thou Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers; and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind. For the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever**.

* 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.



S E C K E R ' s
A C T S E R M O N ,

Preached before the UNIVERSITY of
OXFORD, on ACT SUNDAY in the
Afternoon, *July* 8, 1733.





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DEUT. xxxii. 46, 47.

And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words, which I testify among you this day; which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.

For it is not a vain thing for you: Because it is your life; and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land whither you go over Jordan to possess it.

THESE Words contain the last exhortation, which Moses, the great founder of the Jewish state, gave his countrymen, on the very day wherein he had notice of his approaching death. He had freed them, with infinite danger to himself, from Egyptian tyranny,

tyranny, and the worse bondage of idolatry and superstition: he had received for them, from God's own mouth, such laws of life, as in their circumstances were most conducive to virtue and happiness: these he had delivered to his people, established on the surest foundation of regard; affectionate reverence to the object of all duty, and Author of all good: he had laboured, with infinite patience, through a long course of years, to cultivate in them this important principle of religious obedience: and now, drawing near to the close of a life spent in their service, he recommends it again; first, with all the force of a most persuasive eloquence; and afterwards, by every charm, that poetry itself could add; setting happiness and misery before them, in an ode of Divine sublimity and spirit, which they are commanded by Heaven to learn themselves and teach their posterity. This therefore he communicates in a solemn manner to the whole congregation, as the conclusion of all his cares for them; and then takes his final leave in the exhortation of the Text, confirming once more at his death the importance of those precepts, which he had been giving them through his whole life. *Set your hearts, &c.*

Their own observance of God's law was securing the felicity of one generation only: but educating their children in religion and virtue, this

this was perpetuating blessings to each part of the society, and to the whole : lasting prosperity and peace, in the good land they were going to possess ; and in that *better country* *, of which it was an emblem, *life for evermore* †.

The words afford then a just occasion for speaking,

I. Of the advantages of right education : and,

II. The duty of endeavouring, that these advantages may be obtained.

I. The advantages, and indeed necessity, of right education.

Other creatures arrive, without their own care, at the small perfection, of which they are capable, and there stop : but the whole of man's existence, that appears, is a state of discipline and progression. Youth is his preparation for maturer years : this whole life, for another to come. Nature gives the abilities to improve ; but the actual improvement, we are to have the pleasure and the reward of giving ourselves and one another. Some minds indeed, as some soils, may be fruitful without cultivation ; others, barren with it ; but the general necessity is the same in both cases ; and in both, the richest, and most capable of producing good fruit, will be over-run, if neglected, with the rankest and worst weeds.

Now

* Heb. xi. 16.

† Ps. cxxxiii. 4.

Now the only universal precaution, that can be in this respect, christianity hath furnished, by introducing a stated method of instruction, unknown before ; which, joined with the parents private care, is, to the generality of mankind, sufficient for the purposes of intellectual and moral improvement. But to persons of more extensive influence, a more particular and appropriated institution is necessary ; for the world's sake as well as their own. This, with regard to the teachers of religion, men almost without exception acknowledge : but too commonly forget it in another case, of no less importance ; theirs I mean, whose authority is to enforce the laws of conduct, and whose example to lead the way in life. Here sometimes, a wrong care, often an imperfect one, is taken by the fondest parents. The outward accomplishments and decencies of behaviour they teach them with great exactness, and do well ; but then, without the least further provision, send them abroad into the school of the world, there to learn what they can. The consequence is, what must naturally be expected : trifles and follies, ever readiest at hand, and best suited to the unjudging mind, get first into possession ; and, in many, leave place for nothing else to enter. Such, unqualified for the valuable employments of life, must lose their days in the low amusements of a false and effeminate politeness;

liteness; hoping for no higher a character than a set of creatures, equally contemptible, can give one another by mutual admiration; and happy after all, if they chance to preserve an innocent worthlessness.

But suppose room left for some attention to knowledge; not even the forms of decent carriage, though obvious things, are fully learnt without regular application: what sort of acquaintance then with science must that be, which is picked up occasionally and by accident? A thorough one indeed we must judge it; were the first appearance to determine us: that air of sufficiency, with which a person thus educated for the most part delivers his sentiments. But if we examine, as the world will, what is under this appearance to support it; then a mind is discovered, thoughtlessly persuaded of its own knowledge, where it is very ignorant; and affecting knowledge, even though it is conscious of having none: first making hastily whatever determination is fashionable, about questions half understood, and not at all considered, be their importance what it will; and then going on immediately to act upon this determination, without the least diffidence, or the least thought what the laws of human actions are; unmoved by reason, and scorning it: but changing frequently on mere fancy, and fluctuating through life without rule or guide, from the
forward

forward extravagancies of a profligate youth, to the end of an early and despicable old age.

The benefits of conversation greatly depend on the previous attainments, both of those, who are supposed to communicate knowledge, and to receive it. If therefore instruction be neglected, conversation will grow trifling; if perverted, dangerous. Still, acquaintance with the world, however corrupted, may be an useful part of education; but then it must be the last. It gives a beautiful polish: but of this the best prepared mind will be the most susceptible. It teaches many things: but good or bad, according as the learner is qualified to distinguish. He, whom improved good sense hath enabled to observe upon common practice, will extract wisdom and virtue from the vices and follies of mankind. But such as are ignorant, and capable only of imitating, will of course admire the worst of what they see; and be the more effectually ruined, the more they aim to be accomplished. It is therefore a merciless thing, to throw out poor creatures, unprincipled in what is right, to shift for themselves, where so much wrong is to be learnt.

Regular cultivation of the understanding then is what good education begins with. The earliest branch of this, acquaintance with useful languages, unlocks the treasures of ancient learning, and makes the improvements of every age

age and climate our own. Then the politer parts of literature most agreeably open the faculties, and form the taste of young persons; adorn our discourse, and endear our company, in riper years; give a grace to wisdom and virtue; relieve the fatigue of our busy hours, and elegantly fill up the leisure of our vacant ones. At the same time the art of just reasoning opportunely comes in, to curb the licence of imagination, and direct its force; to fix the foundations of science; ascertain the degrees of probability, and unveil specious error. With this guide we proceed securely. Knowledge of nature opens the universe to our view; enables us to judge worthily of the constitution of things; secures us from the weakness of vulgar superstitions; and contributes, in many ways, to the health and security, the convenience and pleasure of human life. If from hence we go on to survey mankind; a contemplation of their different states in different ages, and especially of their ancient regulations and laws, the publick wisdom of brave and great nations, will furnish variety of useful reflections to the mind: often teaching us to improve our own condition, often to be happy in it.

It must be obvious, how rational an entertainment these things are; and how useful materials they furnish, to ripen and perfect that
prudence

prudence and good sense, which not only carries us through the business of life, but gives relish and stability to the pleasures of it. If then knowledge ought to be attained, the way to it ought to be made easy; by removing difficulties, cautioning against mistakes, and leading forwards in a right method. Above all, application ought to be secured, by the authority of a prudent instructor, and emulation excited, by a number of fellow-learners.

But if education stop here, it hath only given abilities and powers, the direction of which to right or wrong purposes is greatly uncertain still. He that knows not the proper use of his own being; *what is man and whereto serveth he, what is his good and what is his evil* *; may easily employ his other knowledge, so as to be much the worse for it. This enquiry then is the important one. Various methods of conducting life present themselves; contradictory inclinations demand to be gratified: the conflict is painful: the end of it may be more so: which way is right, and which shall we take? Now there is a science, that can direct us here: can show us an inward principle, endued with native authority to govern all the rest: obedience to which gives a steady aim and self-approbation to our conduct, bestows on us the truest satisfactions of life, and delivers us from its
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* Ecclus. xviii. 8.

forest evils. Nor are morals only the source of private happiness, but the great foundation of mutual security, the only one of esteem and friendship amongst men. A person of true goodness, though otherwise of small accomplishments, will always make an amiable figure in society, and be a valuable part of it: whereas, without a virtuous heart, the superior abilities of the great man will only render him a more extensive mischief; and the deceitful agreeableness of the gay man qualify him to mislead, betray, and ruin, more entirely, those with whom he converses. Thus wherever wickedness increases, will misery increase also; till the end be universal confusion. For though a constitution, sinking under vice, may preserve for some time the florid look of health; yet inward strength, and lasting vigour are what nothing but virtue, public and private, can give to any people. This is that true wisdom, *in whose right hand is length of days, and in her left, riches and honour* *.

Now the foundations of virtue are indeed laid by nature, both in the reason and affections of mankind, though fallen: but reason is so often inattentive, and affections are so easily depraved, that without further care, those moral principles, which make the best part of our inward frame, will in most men be greatly ob-
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scured,

* Prov. iii. 16.

scured, and in some, to all appearance, quite effaced. And, were even those of righter minds left each to form their private system, tenderness for their own failings, or prejudice for those of the world, would often lead them into imperfect notions and wrong practice. One indispensable branch then of liberal education is an accurate institution in this important science: to pull off the disguises which vice affects to wear; and place the consequences of it in a just light; to point out the less obvious advantages of virtue, and shew its restraints to end in real freedom; to represent the strict connexions of its several parts, and make strong the proof, that *knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom, neither at any time the Council of sinners prudence* *.

And when should the science of life be taught, but in the beginning of life, before evil habits are added to original depravity: whilst the natural regard to truth and right, the only inward restraint of incautious youth, remains comparatively incorrupt; and the seeds of sin lie yet somewhat loose on the surface of the mind; much harder to be cleared away, when once they have taken root, and twisted themselves strongly about the heart. This therefore is the favourable opportunity, in which authority and reason must exert at once their joint force. For discipline without in-
struction

* Ecclus. xix. 22.

struction is mere tyranny; and instruction without discipline, little better than useless talk. Things owned to be fit and good are neglected, because disagreeable: Things evidently hurtful pursued for present pleasure. Here authority comes in to the aid of reason; enforces virtuous application; restrains vicious indulgences; tempers the warmth of youth; prepares us for the future subordinations of life; conducts us safe through the unseen dangers of our most dangerous time; and then by gentle degrees withdraws its influence, as the power of self-government grows up. Where want of this care leaves young persons too soon in the worst of hands, their own; it is dreadful to see, into what irretrievable miseries they plunge, in the very beginning of their course. And therefore, the more liberty they are afterwards to enjoy; the more prudent, though not stricter restraint they should be under at first; and entered by slow steps into the world at large, with all possible cautions given them of the hazards they are going upon, and (God knows) have little reason to be eager for.

But the most serious part of education is wanting still: the part which leads us, by the esteem of moral excellence, to honour and love that Being, in whom the perfection of it dwells; and extends our inward sense of duty, suggested first by the low and short-lived rela-

tions between us and our fellow-creatures, to the highest possible and eternal object of it, the Creator and Ruler of this universe. He, by whose pleasure we are, from whose favour all that we enjoy and hope for comes, according to whose determination our whole existence shall be happy or miserable, is not surely one with whom we are unconcerned. And, however, a base nature may value itself on the impotent affectation of slighting God; every worthy mind will delight to express that veneration, and pay that obedience, which are due to him, who is the Lord of all: due by every strongest claim, whether unassisted reason discover the general laws of his moral kingdom; or infinite wisdom, the best judge of our circumstances, condescend to adapt to them further obligations. It is indeed the sense of our living under his government and care, that makes our condition of being desirable. Religion, filling the mind with that object which it naturally seeks, a sovereign protector, infinitely wise and good, effectually excludes all superstitious terrors; and, far from depressing the tenderest spirit, exalts us into every thought and every hope, that is great and noble. Turbulence and passions, and obstinacy of self-will, these are the things, that tear and weaken the soul: Reverence of God, by awing them into composure, strengthens every inward principle that

that ought to be strong; and if it prunes the luxuriances, promotes by so doing the vigour of the mind. Religion comprehends at once every motive, both of virtue and of private interest, that can either direct or support the heart in every part of conduct; joins in perpetual union our duty and our happiness; and makes the universal scheme of things consistent, beautiful, and good.

Surely then, principles of such a tendency ought to have an early and diligent cultivation in every breast; but theirs especially, whose rank or profession will make it of the most publick consequence. They, who object against this care, as instilling prejudices, should consider, that virtue, honour, decency are prejudices just of the same sort; and think what would follow, were men to enter upon life free from the biases of any one good quality. But in truth, God himself, not man, hath planted these just prepossessions in the heart: and all that education does, is to favour their growth. Religion and the evidences for it may indeed be unfairly represented by its teachers: and what part of knowledge may not? But are only the teachers of religion capable of misrepresenting it? Hath not every vicious man as strong a motive to incline him against it, as even those maintained by it have, to incline them in its favour? Hath not fondness of novelty

and affectation of superior sense and learning, as great influence on some persons, as credulity can have on others? Do we not every day see men determine positively against religion, who are known never once to have thought of it in earnest; and attack it by all the unfair arts in the world, whilst they themselves are declaiming against such arts? Do we not see them even triumph in the thought of its being false, though the everlasting happiness of every good man depends upon its truth? And are these the worthy spirits, to whose tutoring young persons are to be delivered over in their native ignorance, for fear of prejudices? Or is it not on all accounts wise and fit, that the mind, whilst untainted with evil communication or vice, should have the most important of all truths confirmed to it by proper arguments; and be formed to the right and happy temper, of chearful obedience to the greatest and best of Beings, *the Father and God of our lives* *.

Since therefore instruction of youth in religion, virtue, and knowledge, appears attended with so many advantages, it follows,

II. That all persons concerned should endeavour, with united care, in their several stations, that these advantages may be effectually obtained; especially in the places dedicated to that purpose.

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* Ecclus. xxiii. 4.

The publick care, in this respect, we must ever gratefully own, continued through a long succession of our princes ; and flourishing still in its height, under the administration of a King, zealous for the happiness of his people, and resolute to maintain all the rights of all his subjects. Next to whose assured and experienced protection we cannot but graciously acknowledge the gracious munificence of his royal consort ; therefore bountiful to religion and learning, because she most intimately knows their value, and most affectionately esteems them.

Secure then of the publick favour to whatever is connected with the publick good ; we have only their attention to solicit who are personally interested : parents, or whoever supply their place ; the conductors of education ; and, the young persons to be educated.

To you, who are parents, nature itself hath given a tender concern for your childrens welfare, as your own ; and reminds you justly, that, as you have brought them into the dangers of life, your business is to provide, that they get well through them. Now the only provision commonly attended to, of wealth and honours, can never produce happiness, unless the mind, on which all depends, be taught to enjoy them properly. Fortune without this, will but lead them to more abandoned

fallies of extravagance ; and rank expose them to more publick censure. Education then is the great care, with which you are entrusted ; scarce more for their sakes than your own. You may be negligent of your son's instruction : but it is on you, as well as himself, that his ignorance and contemptibleness will bring both reproach and inconvenience. You may be regardless of his morals : but you may be the person, who will at last the most severely feel his want of them. You may be indifferent about his religion : but remember, dutifulness to you is one great precept of religion : and all the rest promote such habits, as you may bitterly repent, when it is too late, your omission to cultivate in him ; and live and die miserable on his account, whom timely care would have made your joy and honour.

Parents therefore should always be friends to education, and to places of education : should wish well to them ; and never, without great reason think ill of them. The enemies of religion and virtue, an increasing number, will of course be enemies to those who teach them ; and the more so, the more carefully they teach them. The enemies to either part of our happy constitution, will look with an evil eye on establishments, designed for the support of both : more private motives will excite injurious treatment of them from some persons.

And

And even those of better meaning, may be engaged by misinformations and prejudices, to pass harsh judgments and say unfriendly things. But reasonable men will always distinguish, by what person, on what grounds, with what temper, and what views, disadvantageous characters are given, or reports raised. They will also consider, that the unhappy divisions of this nation cannot but have caused, on all sides, in length of time, some degree of wrong opinion and wrong conduct towards one another; mutual jealousies and misunderstandings between those, whose interests, and whose intentions, were in general the same: Differences, which it must be ruinous to heighten, dangerous to continue, useless to pass judgment in; but most important to reconcile, by such conduct on every hand, as may give no suspicion of ill design, but all proofs of good. Friendly methods will not fail to unite the hearts of men; and make them susceptible of mutual advice and improvement, assistance and benefit. Whoever will view the seats of learning, with these considerations present to his mind, will judge favourably concerning them, and not only admire the pious bounty of our ancestors, who dedicated these delightful retreats to knowledge and virtue, founded these beautiful structures, enriched them with such amazing treasures of literature, and pro-

vided so nobly for the accommodation of fit persons to enjoy and communicate the instruction of them ; but be thankful for the many and great blessings, which they have conveyed to every age, and will, we hope, derive to latest posterity.

Ideas of perfection are visionary things : but look into fact, and where will those, who inveigh against the education of our universities, recommend a more improving one ? The indulgent softness of the parents family is apt, at best, to give young persons a most unhappy effeminateness; the governor, if he hath abilities, hath scarce ever authority to enforce diligence ; want of rivals keeps the mind languid ; and upon the whole, seldom any thing considerable comes out. If now the contrary method be taken, of sending them, raw and uninstructed, to visit foreign countries ; what improvement will minds unprepared for improvement make there ? As to religion ; the disuse of frequenting its exercises, and the daily view of its corruptions, will be in danger of effacing all regard to it. With respect to morals ; in the midst of so great temptation, so little restraint, and so general bad example, it must be a high degree of virtue, that can keep itself in countenance. Then for such opportunities of instruction, as different laws, manners, and customs, may be supposed to give, these

these require a mind trained up before-hand to attention and judgment. On all others they will be just as likely to make wrong impressions as right, if they make any : but indeed what impressions of all kinds are usually made, and how far the improvements brought home answer the national expence for them, lies within the compass of daily observation.

If then, in the next place, we compare at least foreign universities with our own : is their theology worthier of God, more conformable to reason and primitive christianity ; is their philosophy juster and more solid, less full of imagination and hypothesis ; than that of our great countrymen, whose names I need not suggest ? Will the ornamental rewards of learning be more fitly bestowed, where no time previous to the application for them is required ? will industry be more universal, without any inspection over it ; behaviour more regular, without any rule set to it ; than where young persons are formed into orderly societies, distinguished by proper habits, restrained to proper hours, obliged to proper studies, and watched over with continual care ? Miscarriages, after all, will happen in such numbers of such an age. But the general good order that reigns here, to most foreigners, not the worst judges in this case, appears incredible when related, and very surprising when seen. It remains

mains only to wish, what there never was more hope of; that, as our universities have long excelled all others, they may continually improve upon themselves.

But still, parents must not expect their childrens improvement should be great, unless they contribute their own share to it. If indolence and luxury be taught them by bad example, or prejudice against every thing serious and praise-worthy by bad conversation, before they come hither; if they come with little or no charge given about regularity and application, but licence be claimed for them in proportion to their quality; or if, after the mere form of a short confinement here, they are let immediately loose, to wear off by negligence and profligateness the few slight good impressions that could be made; what room hath the parent to hope for improvement, or complain if none be found?

But let him be careful in his own duty first; then the persons, to whom he commits his child afterwards, will undertake with some comfort an office, laborious and important at all times; but particularly so in an age of uncommon corruption: when the expectations of good men are more than ever fixed on their discharging this trust well; and their failure will give bad ones the double joy, of seeing wickedness flourish, and accusing them for it.

Complaints

Complaints indeed of unjust accusations were never better grounded: but complaints alone will do little good; and even deserved returns of bitterness may do much harm. The only remedy is, that *by well doing we put to silence* * the unreasonableness of ill persons, and secure the protection of those who mean well.

The educator of youth therefore will first perfect himself in each needful qualification, and then apply to forming others. In every science he will join the discoveries of later times with such instruction, as may render the learning of former ages intelligible; and prudently direct the more particular attention of each person to such things, as may chiefly relate to their future part in life.

The foundations of religion he will lay deep and strong: recommending the great articles of it, not to the passions of those under his care, by warmth and vehemence; but to their reason and faith, by just explications and conclusive arguments: neither loading revelation with unauthorized doctrines and needless difficulties; nor yielding up the least real part of it to defend the rest; nor altering the least to give it a more plausible appearance. A disputing and cavilling temper he will endeavour to repress; but will treat with all tenderness the doubts of an ingenuous mind; and ever encourage

* 1 Pet. ii. 15.

encourage that sacred regard to truth, which makes men worthy of esteem, even whilst they err, and is the great security of their returning into the right way. He will take fit opportunity of showing, how closely a due regard to the teachers of religion and virtue is connected with the practice of both. But the persons, whose employment teaching them is to be, he will studiously warn, that the only way of securing this regard is, by useful and exemplary lives; prudent and inoffensive conduct; and so hearty a friendship to all just and reasonable liberty, as may give them unsuspected authority to oppose the dissolute licentiousness, that in vain assumes its name.

To civil government he will conscientiously teach that dutiful obedience and honour, which Christianity requires all subjects to pay; and which the happiest subjects in the world ought to pay with the chearfullest gratitude. He will discourage with all possible care, the rage of party zeal; which warm and inexperienced minds too often mistake for publick spirit. Admitted in this fair disguise, it possesses the whole man; tinctures his way of thinking on almost every subject; leads him to hate and injure worthy persons, to admire and associate amongst very bad ones; with whom this immoral temper stands in the stead of all merit, whilst indeed it hinders the acquiring of any. As life goes on, these evils encrease: of which
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all the world complains, but unhappily indulges them at the same time ; instead of each curbing, on his own side, the eagerness and keenness of so malevolent a principle. Young persons should therefore be reminded, that the seats of learning are purposely secreted from the busy scenes of life ; that the time for engaging in those will come but too soon : and mean while the generous ardor of youth should be exerted in making the preparation of useful knowledge and virtuous habits ; but ever tempered with such mildness and diffidence concerning matters of which they need not judge yet, as they will every day see more necessary in order to judge and act right.

This is indeed one part of morals : and on every other part the director of education will have an attentive eye. Even the sallies of a well-meant fervor he will prudently moderate, when they give religion a gloomy appearance, or add to it a needless burden. But much more strictly will he guard against the opposite extreme of libertinism and profaneness : labouring to keep up, not only an outward form of regularity, but a serious awe of God, and sense of duty, in every mind : watching over each tendency to vice : and considering wilful neglect of application, as a dangerous kind of guilt. In order to this great end of preserving morals, he will preserve and countenance, as far

far as it remains possible, that temperance of living, simplicity of appearance. and frugality of expence, which are usually brought hither, and so peculiarly suit this institution; which keep the mind in fit temper for the exercise of its faculties, and defend it from the corruptions of luxury and vanity; lay the foundations of health and prudence in men for the rest of their days, and prepare them to be virtuous and easy in whatever stations may prove their share.

It remains only now, that the person, of whom all this care is taken, should know and improve his own happiness. Too many there are, that set out upon the important journey of life, without a skilful, or perhaps a friendly hand, to conduct them through the difficulties of the untried and hazardous way. These are greatly excusable in their faults, and pitiable in their miseries. But of you God and man will expect attainments that may bear proportion to the advantages, with which you are blessed. Nature engages your parents; duty, honour, and interest, your instructors, to consult your welfare: which they desire as much as yourselves, and understand better. Restrain therefore, and apply yourselves as they direct; though you not only feel it painful, but see it not yet beneficial: and trust those, who have all imaginable claim to be trusted, that, by quick degrees,

degrees, the pain will wear off, and the benefit be evident.

Their province, who are devoted to the service of religion, will be to appear, perhaps after a very short preparation, in an age strongly prejudiced against them and their function: sure objects, without merit, of contempt and hatred; but with it, capable still of being esteemed and useful. This situation, you see, requires in the first place, that you carefully acquaint yourselves with the proofs, the doctrines, and precepts of the Gospel revelation. Fear not therefore making free inquiry into every thing. Others inquire with bad intention: if you do it not with good, you will want true learning, to oppose against the false and half-learning of unbelievers. Only begin not your enquiry, till you are qualified: and end it not, till you have considered matters thoroughly. Young minds, and often the most generous of them, are apt to pursue truth with an impatience, that occasions their missing it. Nothing ought ever to stand against full evidence, well weighed: but many things may induce those, who have yet had little time for thought, to think again, and be diffident in the mean while. For not only the world too commonly imputes to a man, all his life, the indigested notions of his early years; but persons list themselves by positive talk, and then cannot retreat. With
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this caution, and with due method, diligence will go far in acquiring knowledge. But knowledge is only one part of what must be attended to. The unguarded conduct, even of persons of younger days, will be treasured up in many a malicious memory to their future disadvantage; and though an affectation of untimely gravity fits ill, yet innocence and piety are the duties of every age. They especially, whose profession will make a stricter abstinence from doubtful and imprudent pleasures expected of them hereafter, will find it much the safest and easiest to begin now; and by an uniform life, grow regularly up into that esteem, which their destination will require.

And though neither the same diligence of application, nor such accuracy of conduct, may appear necessary in those of higher rank; yet an improved understanding must be an advantage, and the want of it a blemish, proportionably conspicuous, as the station in which either appears, is publick; and the choice, how life shall be spent, is always important in the same degree, as the persons are who make it. Such therefore, of all others, should not take it hastily for granted, that an immoral course is right. To begin with virtue, at least till fair inquiry rejects it, is evidently the safe part. No one ever bitterly condemned himself, that he had spent his younger years soberly;
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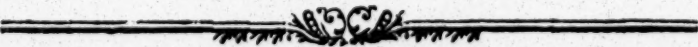
many have, that they did not. Then, some degrees of vice are owned to produce misery; and every vice leads on to worse degrees of itself, and variety of others. Or, though a vicious person could depend on suffering no present harm; yet he cannot fail of doing a great deal: and a man would not choose, that the chief traces, which he leaves behind him, to mark out his passage through life, should be so many injuries done his fellow creatures. At least no one would venture upon this, till he were sure there is no superior inspector of his conduct. Now there cannot be certainty against religion; and there are such evidences for it, as must require more than a few slight cavils or bold jests, to overturn them. A careful examination then it justly demands. And if upon such examination it prove true, as undoubtedly it will; remember it is a most serious truth, in which the foremost of mankind is equally concerned with the meanest. Therefore in a case of such moment, let no false shame, nor favourite passion prevail over you; but *give your hearts early to the Lord that made you* *. Lay the foundation of your lives here on the firm ground of christian faith; and build upon it whatever is just and good, worthy and noble, till the structure be complete in moral beauty. The world, into which you
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* Eccclus. xxxix. 3.

are entering, lies in wait with variety of temptations. Unfavourable sentiments of religion will soon be suggested to you; and all the snares of luxury, false honour, and interest, spread in your way; which with most of your rank are too successful, and to many fatal. Happy the few, that in any part of life become sensible of their errors; and with painful resolution, tread back the wrong steps, which they have taken! but happiest of men is he, who, by an even course of right conduct, from the first, as far as human frailty permits, hath at once avoided the miseries of sin, the sorrows of repentance, and the difficulties of virtue; who not only can think of his present state with composure, but reflect on his past behaviour with thankful approbation, and look forwards with unmixed joy to that important future hour, when he shall appear before God, and humbly offer to him a whole life spent in his service!

P O W E L L ' s
FIRST DISCOURSE.

Of the Vices incident to an Academi-
cal Life.





P O W E L L ' s
FIRST DISCOURSE.

Of the Vices incident to an Academic
Life.

Hebrews, xii. part of ver. 1.

The sin that doth so easily beset us.

THERE are writers of some reputation in Physick, who have undertaken to explain, to what particular diseases men are exposed by each profession and employment. Whatever their success has been, the design was certainly good; and, if the attempt is not too difficult, it will be useful to pursue the same plan in our moral inquiries. We frequently exhort every man to observe with care the complexion and temper of his soul; and to apply all such remedies, as may either prevent or palliate those disorders, to which his natural constitution makes him subject. But every man is not able to judge of his own dispositions; and what we call nature is
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more often habit. It would be well therefore if we could assist the diligent searcher of his heart, by shewing him, what vices usually accompany his situation and circumstances. He will more easily discover his own personal character, if he is acquainted with that of the rank or order to which he belongs.

Very little pains have been employed by any moral writers to this purpose. They have told us perhaps, what are the faults of youth, and of age; what the dangers of riches, and of poverty: but if any thing has been said concerning the characters of particular professions, it has been by the satyrists, not the serious moralists. It will not, I hope, be thought, that I wander into their province; if I enter on that part of this subject which most nearly concerns ourselves, and inquire, what are the chief difficulties and dangers in the practice of virtue, to which men of retired and studious lives, abstracted in a great degree from the pleasures, the business, and the conversation of the world, are exposed.

And the fault that first offers itself, as most immediately connected with such a situation, and from which almost all its others dangers spring, is an habit of *indolence*. Not labour only, but industry of every kind, is usually attended with some portion of
present

present uneasiness. But, this virtue being of much importance to the general welfare of mankind, a particular provision has been made for it in the constitution of the world. It is not left, like many other virtues, under the guardianship of reason and reflection; but its mother, necessity, is ever living and watchful to preserve it. The greatest part of mankind must labour or perish. Many others are constantly engaged in providing for the ease and satisfaction of themselves and their families. Even the votaries of pleasure are obliged to attend it at fixed places and seasons; and enjoy it under such conditions, as change their amusements into business. On those only who are withdrawn from the pleasures and the pains of social life, have the immediate motives to industry no influence. And, though they may easily discern, that, by the appointment of God, every thing good and valuable is the reward of our earnest endeavours; that, without them, wealth and honour can seldom, learning and virtue can never, be acquired; yet are there not many men in whom the strength of reason, unassisted by passion, is able to prevail against a present pain.

The passions are another excellent contrivance of the Author of Nature, to keep all the faculties of our souls active and

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vigorous. When the immediate occasions of industry cease, these often supply the want of them. And how nicely they are adjusted to the general state and condition of mankind, may be observed in this, as in innumerable other instances. Though we hear so many complaints of their mighty force; yet diminish it a little, and they are useless. Place a man in a situation, where they are not frequently exercised; and he is in danger of sinking into an unfeeling lethargy. Such is the situation we are considering. For the exercise of the passions arises chiefly from the various turns and accidents in human affairs. What we experience at all times, will at no time affect us. If a man's life runs on in the same even tenor, yesterday, and to-day, and to-morrow; all the events of it pass by him unnoticed: there is nothing to awaken his attention, much less to move his passions: he becomes indifferent to every acquirement, fatigued with every pursuit.

It cannot be doubted but the mind may be employed in a closet, and as fully engaged in a search after knowledge, as in the more noisy scenes of business or folly. And the force of an uncommon genius, the prospect of reputation or advantage, or even a strong habit of industry early acquired, may sometimes prevent that satiety, which

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is apt to mix itself with all human conditions. But it will require more than an ordinary share of resolution, for one of only moderate abilities, who has no expectation of making any great discoveries, or of obtaining any considerable rewards by his progress in learning, to continue the pursuit of it during his whole life, unless he is often relieved by other occupations or amusements. The same task constantly repeated must at length prove irksome. The most delicious repast, if set before us every day, would become insipid or distasteful.

We must therefore confess, that a station, which removes the common motives to industry; which impairs the vigour of the passions, its chief supports; and at the same time renders it more than usually burthen some; is likely to make men indolent.

Indolence, in a Being, whose faculties all depend, both for their preservation and improvement, on continual exercise, is unquestionably a great fault. But it comes not without a long train of attendants. That we may view them distinctly, let us consider the mischievous effects of this habit, and of the retirement which produces it on the understanding and the affections.

Any serious employment of the understanding is inconsistent with habitual indolence.

lence. Discussion and inquiry are always laborious. Time and patience and pains are necessary to separate truth from falsehood; to collect, and to compose the arguments on each side. Prejudices arising from temper, from education, from interest, and from innumerable other causes, are not easily overcome. And when a ray of reason breaks through them, resolution is wanted to follow steadily its guidance. And yet without this labour we forfeit all the use and benefit of our understanding. If we snatch the first appearances, and sit down contented with them, to what purpose is it, that we are able to investigate hidden truths? What avails our faculty of judging, if we suffer each thin pretence to conceal them from us?

It might be expected, that they, who entertain every wandering opinion without examination, should dismiss it without regret on the arrival of a new guest. But the fact is otherwise. This kind of levity is attended with obstinacy. The same disposition which leads men into error, makes them unwilling to correct it. A state of doubtfulness is a state of uneasiness. The mind therefore hastens to the end of its journey; but to trace its steps back again, and examine all the windings, by which the truth may have escaped,

escaped, is to the indolent an intolerable labour.

But if this disposition is the parent of obstinacy, retirement is its nurse. The retired man's thoughts are confined to few subjects, his conversation to few persons. As these will usually fall into the same habit of thinking, and be restrained within the same little compass, each will confirm himself, and each the others, in the sentiments they have embraced: whilst the mind, which ranges through the various fields of science, will be less fond of each notion; and, when men of different characters and employments meet, opposite prejudices will check each other, and nature and reason, upon the whole, prevail. Even an unrestrained conversation among our own countrymen is not usually thought a sufficient security against narrow and illiberal conceptions of persons and things. Every nation has its peculiar character; and they, who would open and enlarge their understandings, visit distant countries, and examine the principles, they have hastily imbibed at home, by the manners and sentiments of foreigners. But if a whole people may obstinately adhere to the same established errors, there is much greater danger, that this should happen to small societies of men, educated by the same con-

tracted plan, and studying together the same favourite systems.

The faults already mentioned, lead to another, self-conceit. The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that can render a reason. He, who has no inclination to learn more, will be very apt to think that he knows enough. Nor is it wonderful that he should pride himself in the abundance of his wisdom, with whom every wavering thought, every half formed imagination, passes for a fixed and substantial truth. Obstinacy also, which makes him unable to discover his mistakes, makes him believe himself unable to commit them.

Self-conceit, in return, promotes indolence and obstinacy. For why should he toil any longer in the mines of knowledge, who is already possessed of their most valuable treasures? How can he submit to try his opinions by the judgment of others, who is himself the fittest to decide?

This temper, when the mind is conversant with points of the highest nature, such as relate to religion and government, will shew itself in violent bigotry. What indeed is this, but an obstinate adherence to ill-grounded notions; with a conceit, that we only, and those of our own sect or party, are the favourites of God, and the friends of mankind,

mankind, and that all who differ from us are weak or wicked? Want of industry to examine our own tenets, of candour to listen to those of others, and of modesty in judging of both, lays a sure foundation for this vice; which can never be removed, but by another thing equally wanted, an extensive acquaintance with the world. This would certainly convince us, that among persons of every denomination some may be found of excellent understandings, and distinguished virtue.

There are no subjects, about which men are less apt to be diffident, than those where diffidence most becomes them, subjects of the greatest importance and the greatest difficulty. Such as call themselves philosophers and masters of reason, seem afraid to use their reason in their most essential concerns. Whatever skill they employ, is employed in the defence of particular systems; and they reject with abhorrence all suspicions of mistake. But how free soever these doctrines may be from mistake, yet the mind accustomed to determine peremptorily, and fondly to admire its own judgments, will get such a wrong bias as all its philosophy cannot overcome. And thus the noblest studies, by imprudent management, are made to serve

no other purpose, but to increase our obstinacy and self-opinion.

From understandings thus perverted what great improvements in science can be expected? As great indeed as were ever produced in all the monasteries in Christendom. How many thousands were, for many centuries, constantly set apart for the cultivation of divine and human learning! And yet how little did they contribute towards the revival of letters, or the reformation of religion! Their indolence prevented the one, their obstinacy and bigotry the other. And if the same causes had not retained some influence, even in societies, whose separation from the world is less rigid than that of the cloister; those absurd and slavish principles of government, which are now fled into everlasting darkness, would not have left their last footsteps before the altars of God, and in the fairest temples of literature. If just reasoning and true philosophy had not prevented their entrance, yet concern for the welfare of mankind, or zeal for the honour of religion, should quickly have banished them. But these motives must lose their influence among men, whose retirement renders them languid in every friendly affection, unmoved with every sentiment of devotion.

Indolence

Indolence affects not the understanding only. It spreads a general numbness and insensibility over the whole soul; and makes it unable to feel the warmth of the benevolent affections. It cannot be imagined, that he, who is indifferent to his own concerns, will be solicitous for the happiness of others; or that he will officiously engage in the labour of love, to whom every species of labour seems insupportable. Generous and friendly dispositions flourish only among vigorous and active faculties.

Nay, if indolence could be excluded, yet the shade of retirement is itself sufficient to chill the friendly affections. Let the difference be observed between a man's compassion for a stranger in distress, and his anxiety, his tenderness, for a friend, a companion, a neighbour; and we shall easily be convinced, how much these affections are nurtured and cherished by society and conversation. Such is the constitution of human nature, that our inclinations, of every kind, strengthen and decay with the powers and occasions of exerting them. Now the persons, whose happiness or misery depends upon us, being chiefly those which come immediately under our notice and acquaintance, our benevolence is in a great measure confined to them; and

will therefore retain the less force, the more these connections are contracted.

But this danger arises not wholly from the nature of a reclusive life. The circumstances of it are often such as have a still greater tendency to weaken the benevolent affections. The strongest of these affections are directed by nature towards particular objects; and when these objects are removed, their course, though it may be stopped, cannot be diverted. Were men governed by reason only, their regard would constantly follow virtue; which they would reverence and love as much in a stranger as in their nearest relation. But philosophy is far less powerful than instinct. It is not able to exalt friendship into love. It cannot impress on his heart the joys and sorrows of a parent, who has never felt those tender cares. It cannot restore the affection of a son or a brother, when death or absence has destroyed or impaired it.—Some perhaps may expect, that the fewer and weaker mens particular attachments are, the more extensive and the stronger will be their general benevolence. But experience shews the contrary. Break off the nearest ties of affection, and you weaken proportionably all that remain. The most violent of these passions are necessary to soften the mind, and
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render it sensible of the less vigorous impressions. They who are accustomed to consider themselves as interested in the happiness and misery of others, will gradually extend their regards, till they feel for all mankind. Whilst the soul, on which natural sympathy has no influence, can never perceive the finer touches of friendship and humanity. As the heart hardens, it contracts its benevolence, till the whole centers in itself only.

That a man of this character can have nothing of the true spirit of religion, we are told by unerring authority. He that loves not his brother, how can he love God? He that feels no satisfaction from the happiness which is spread through the creation, how can he have any gratitude to the Creator? How can he exalt his mind to a suitable reverence for the goodness of the supreme Being, who has no esteem of those lower degrees of goodness, which are more open to his observation, and more adapted to his capacity? The same lethargic indolence which retards his steps on earth, must for ever stop him in his ascent towards Heaven.

But farther, religious sentiments can only be impressed on the mind by repeated acts of devotion. Now though the external rites and ceremonies

ceremonies of devotion are more frequently performed, yet perhaps they are not more frequently accompanied with seriousness and fervour, in the cloister than in the city. Men cannot at every instant, voluntarily raise in themselves the warmth of adoration. Occasions and accidents are wanted to excite it. The food which daily nourishes us, the light and air we continually enjoy, are some of the greatest blessings of Heaven. But who receives them with rapture? An unexpected advantage, one conveyed to us in an uncommon manner, a deliverance from an impending evil, will call forth warmer sentiments of gratitude, than these universal and continual benefits. In like manner any extraordinary danger will remind men of their dependence on God's protection, and teach them to exercise that submission to his will which in the midst of security they are apt to neglect. Thus the frequent changes of good and evil we experience, the hopes and fears which perpetually surround us, are so many guards to our piety: which is then in the greatest danger, when we are most secure; when our condition in life is least subject to any sudden turns either to happiness or misery. How little therefore do they understand the true springs of devotion, who think that
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every step, by which they retire from the world, is an approach to God !

As little perhaps do they know of human nature, who imagine a strict union betwixt piety and learning. If the love of God is an affection, if the adoration of him should be performed with ardor ; then is constant study, especially of the abstruse sciences, unlikely to improve it. Attention of this kind usually gives the understanding a calm and sedate turn ; which, how useful soever in the performance of other duties will not contribute to the warmth of devotion.

Thus every circumstance conspires to deprive us of the most valuable affections : but there are still greater dangers behind. The mind of man cannot remain long unoccupied. If its proper inhabitants desert it, spectres and evil demons will take possession of it. When solitude and indolence have driven away each pious and each benevolent affection, the mind will be left exposed to the dull and phlegmatic passions.

This hideous troop is led by melancholy. In vain do we expect happiness from quiet and repose. In vain do we think of retiring into ourselves, and feasting on our own contemplations. The heart which loses its regards to God and man, loses also its relish for every enjoyment.

enjoyment. The mind, unsupported by industry and good sense, is in danger of sinking almost into despair.

He who is thus unhappy in himself, will be apt to be displeased with every object and every person around him. And this displeasure will be the greater, if self-conceit makes him imagine, that the world is unjust to him, that his merits might fairly claim better fortune. Such a sour and fretful disposition as is impious towards God, and inhuman towards man, is the natural consequence of pride and melancholy. And this again cannot fail to increase the uneasiness from whence it arises, by enlarging every trifling disappointment, till it becomes a grievous torment.

Nor is it only the sense of present and real misfortunes, which afflicts persons of this temper. They often suffer as much from the apprehensions of future or imaginary evils. When they are dejected without calamities, and angry without injuries; they feign to themselves dangers, where all is safety, and suspect designs against their peace, which are formed only in their own fanciful brain. You will never convince them by a thousand arguments, that they are disturbed or frightened without reason.

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There is no remedy for uneasiness about trifles, but to employ our thoughts with matters of importance. And the courage of a man of business, like that of a soldier, can be acquired only by meeting danger. He that passes his life in the greatest safety, usually passes it in the greatest fear.

These wicked passions can scarce meet in any mind, without introducing one more wicked than themselves. The man that is frequently offended, and continually afraid, will certainly, as far as his power extends, be cruel. Bigotry also often promotes this temper, concealing under the appearance of zeal for religion, or the public good, a vice the most opposite to them both.

Hear then the character of an idle monk, collected from all that has been observed. He is weak, obstinate, conceited, bigoted, unfriendly to man, ungrateful to God, melancholic, fretful, timid, cruel. It concerns us all to be very cautious, that no part of this character belong to us. And this caution is the more necessary, because when any evil passion gets hold of us, it usually seizes the whole soul. A variety of employments and amusements will give rise to various, and even opposite inclinations. And the mind, continually agitated by them, will
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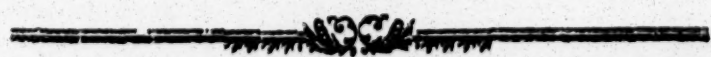
not remain long fixed to one pursuit. Whereas, in a state of indolence and solitude, the same train of thinking runs on without interruption, and the prevailing passion, whatever it is, carries all before it.

Ought we not therefore, it may be asked, to fly from a station, where our virtue and our happiness are exposed to so many dangers? Alas! whither shall we fly? What place, what scene of human life can promise us security? Each condition is surrounded with, different indeed, but almost equal difficulties. Each too has its peculiar advantages to compensate these difficulties, and possibly none may have greater than our own. Nor are the foregoing observations to be understood so strictly, as if they never failed in any instance. Let it not be imagined, that the faults incident to an order must necessarily adhere to all the individuals which compose it. Few are so unfortunate as to be hit by every weapon, which the enemy aims against them. And some, perhaps, either by the natural activity and vigour of their minds may avoid, or with the shield of reason and religion may repel, them all. If this were impossible, the inquiry in which we have been engaged, would be useless. These reflections can serve no other purpose

pose, but that, knowing to what vices our situation inclines us, we may, by continual efforts and firm resolutions, bend all our faculties towards the opposite virtues; and, having extricated ourselves from the sins which most easily beset us, may run with patience the race that is set before us.

B A L G U Y ' s
FIRST DISCOURSE.

The different Characters of Age and
Youth.





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B A L G U Y ' s
FIRST DISCOURSE.

The different Characters of Age and
Youth.

I Cor. xiv. 20.

*In Malice be ye Children, but in Un-
derstanding be Men.*

IT has been observed by a celebrated writer, that *Youth is the season of virtue*. He might have observed, with equal truth, that it is the season of *vice*: since every age of human life has vices, as well as virtues, which are almost peculiar to itself. The decay of our minds is not, like that of our persons, uniform and general: for here the grace which one feature loses, is frequently transferred to another: single parts may grow deformed or disproportioned; while the sum of beauty

beauty continues still the same through the whole period of our existence.

There is as little reason for the reflections we often hear on the improvement or decay of national merit. Kingdoms, as well as men, have their different stages, of infancy, of maturity, of old age : and each of these is by turns admired or censured, according to the different point of view in which it is considered. Some applaud the industry and frugality of a rising people : and complain without ceasing of the effeminacy and luxury of more polished times. Others again are delighted with the improvement of arts, the extension of commerce, the refinement of manners, which are found in a settled and flourishing state ; and look back with contempt or pity on the ignorance and barbarity of their ancestors. Both have a shew of reason, and they have only a shew of it, on their side. The circumstances they observe are, indeed, what they seem to be ; but the observers are deceived, when they draw a general conclusion from an imperfect and partial view.

There is no time of life, in which human virtue is not exposed to difficulties and dangers : but it is never exposed at any one time to dangers of every kind. Our trials are various ; but they are successive : and we have

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no sooner removed one obstacle in our road to perfection, than we are crossed by another. Hence the Scriptures have taught us to consider the whole course of our lives as one continued warfare. The different enemies we have to encounter, do not attack us with united force; but come on singly to the charge: their attacks however follow, one after another, without any interval or intermission; we are subject to perpetual alarms and fears, and it requires our utmost vigilance to make good that post, in which we are stationed by the decrees of Heaven.

It is the business then of a christian, who is sincere in his profession, and animated by the prospect of that immortal prize, which will one day be the reward of his labours, to compensate the disadvantages of his situation, by the steadiness and resolution of his conduct. For, however he may be tempted, he is not compelled to be vicious. He may, if he pleases, acquire those virtues, which are most uncommon in the station he possesses; and forbear those vices, which are most peculiar to it. The task indeed is difficult: but it is great, it is glorious; it is worthy the ambition of a man and a christian.

Agreeably to this representation, the apostle exhorts us to unite in our characters, qualities which are usually found separate,
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the benevolence of youth and the wisdom of age. If we resign ourselves to the dominion of chance and nature, and leave our manners to be formed, as it may happen, by the different circumstances of life : we shall begin our course with a foolish and undiscerning generosity, we shall end it with a selfish and malicious prudence. But though this be the natural course of our passions, it is not the course prescribed to them by reason and religion. These will teach us to distinguish in both characters between what is valuable, and what is hurtful ; to be children in malice, and yet men in understanding.

At our first entrance into the theatre of the world, the novelty of the objects with which we are surrounded, inspires us with alacrity and joy. Every step we take discloses to us some new scene of delight and pleasure : and this constant succession of agreeable spectacles prevents all suspicion of the dark and gloomy prospects, which are soon after to open on our view. Hence, from a thoughtless gaiety of heart, we are pleased, we are satisfied, with every trifling occurrence ; and mistake empty shew and parade for solid happiness. Such a disposition of mind, though springing only from ignorance and inexperience, is yet extremely favourable to our social passions. Cheerfulness and good nature are almost

almost inseparable companions. The more easily we are pleased, the more apt we are to love and to forgive; the more willingly we open our hearts to sentiments of generosity and friendship. The joy we feel in our breasts will not be confined there; but naturally overflows in grateful acknowledgments to those who have been the authors or instruments of it, and in kind offices to all around us. Unaccustomed to suffer harm, we are unapt to suspect it; and he who is free from suspicion, is free from malice.

Such is the amiable picture of human nature, as it comes fresh out of the hands of its Maker, unspoiled by the converse of men, and the dear-bought experience of the ways of the world!—But now that very situation, which (from the constitution of our nature) gives birth to so much virtue and so much happiness, is (through our own neglect) almost equally fruitful in vice and misery. For, as a balance to these singular advantages, Youth is exposed to singular disadvantages, and surrounded with dangers on every side. The want of experience, the imperfection of reason, the impetuosity of our passions, all conspire to divert us from our destined course, and engage us in a life of disorder and folly.

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If virtue and benevolence were synonymous terms, we must unavoidably give the preference to our first years, beyond every succeeding part of human life. But neither is all virtue benevolence; nor is benevolence of every kind, and under all circumstances, justly intitled to the name of virtue. It is virtue to pursue, by just and rational means, our own welfare and happiness: it is vice to neglect this end, or to sacrifice it to our passions. It is surely virtue, both to cultivate in our breasts, and to express by our words and actions, a serious regard to the Governor of the world: and it is vice in the highest degree, to forget him that made us; to be unmindful of his power, and unthankful for his goodness.—On the other hand, it is not virtue, from whatever principle we act, to partake in the faults and follies of others; to comply with men's humours, in opposition to their interest; or to promote the interest of those we love, by actions destructive to the whole community. In short, benevolence, of itself, is perfectly indifferent, as much so as any other passion: it then only merits our approbation and applause, when it uniformly submits to the direction of reason.

Affection

Affection is a blind and undistinguishing principle ; solicitous only for immediate gratification, and inattentive to future dangers. A kind heart, without a sound judgment, is almost as likely to do harm as good. Nay, it may justly be questioned whether malice itself has been productive of greater mischiefs to mankind, than undiscerning and thoughtless friendship. Sometimes it engages us to injure ourselves, without any real advantage to others ; sometimes it defeats its own end, and proves fatal to those whom it means to serve : and very frequently it leads to a violation of those universal rules of truth and justice, which are the support and security of every social good.

But the circumstance which deserves our chief regard, is the tendency of this misguided principle, to cut off the very means by which it ought to have been regulated ; to prevent or retard our progress in wisdom. If we have too hastily yielded up our hearts to the first seducers whom chance has thrown in our way ; we might yet guard against the ill effects of our choice by just reflection and attentive observation, were it not the nature of passion, to misrepresent its own object. But the inclination we have conceived, however unreasonable, will seldom fail to justify itself ;

will enable us to discover imaginary virtues, and make us blind to real faults; blind too to every ill effect either of imprudent confidence, or unbounded indulgence. Nor can any thing but experience open our eyes: a guide which only just shews our error, when it is too late to repent of it.

Benevolence then, when joined with folly, can never form a virtuous character. Let us now turn our thoughts to a different prospect, and consider the union of wisdom and malice. The former, as we have seen, is the character of Youth: the latter too often takes place in our riper years.

Length of days, among numberless other disadvantages, is almost sure to be attended with disgust and satiety. Men are convinced from repeated trials of the insignificance, and folly, and emptiness of the pursuits, the passions, the joys of Youth: and they are exceedingly apt, when they have made this discovery, to be chagrined and soured with the disappointment. In this disposition of mind, they are prone to receive ill impressions, and to view every object in an unfavourable light: quick in discerning faults and errors, slow in acknowledging, and even in perceiving, merit.—Add to this, that experience has taught them to be cautious of trusting to fair appearances, to doubt the sincerity

cerity of the strongest professions; and to impute the most specious and plausible actions to some latent principle of interest or passion. And, having lost their taste for those pleasures, which they had once pursued with so much ardour, they are forced to substitute in its place a new set of desires and inclinations. Wealth and power are now considered as the supreme ends, the most important business of life: and the pursuit of these weakens every social attachment, and affords perpetual occasions of strife and enmity. The companions of our youth are recommended and endeared to us by the share they take in our pleasures: we naturally conceive an esteem and affection for those who are partners in our joy. But, in our riper years, they who aim at the same objects with ourselves are considered, not as partners, but rivals: and he who owes his success to our disappointment, is the object not of esteem, but of envy and hatred.

Thus are men gradually formed to a contracted, a selfish, a malicious temper of mind: and the wisdom which ought to have directed them in the pursuit of general happiness, becomes an instrument in their hands of vice and misery. The improvement of their understanding serves to no other purpose, but to render them more artful and more successful

in doing mischief. And, what is worst of all, their inclination to mischief increases with their ability. The more they know the world, the more they hate it. That superior skill and discernment, which is the result of long experience, discovers to their view every imperfection, every foible of human nature: and since even the best characters will not stand the test of a strict and rigorous inquiry, every character, without exception, is exposed to their dislike and aversion; and they search in vain through the whole compass of the world, without being able to find one single object, which may merit their esteem and approbation.

What now can be expected from the most improved understanding, when joined to so unhappy a temper? It may indeed secure its possessor from the artifices of his enemies, and the treachery of his friends. But will it secure to him the peace of his own mind? Will it not rather expose him to perpetual vexation, and supply him with constant occasions of fretfulness and disquiet? Will it not deprive him of that best and noblest pleasure, which either earth or Heaven is capable of yielding, the consciousness of loving and being beloved? On the other hand, society is sure to suffer from so depraved a state of our affections and
passions.

passions. For it is a vain and foolish pretence, to say (as some have done) that we love the species, though we hate the particulars of which it is composed. Benevolence must rise from individuals to the public: and it is absurd to imagine, that while we fall short of the lower and ordinary degrees of it, we can yet arrive at its supreme excellence, the very summit and perfection of human virtue.

Let not then those qualities be so unnaturally divorced from each other, whose union is so essential to the welfare of mankind. Let us strive, while we are young, to improve in wisdom: let us strive, when we are old, to improve in goodness. In both cases we shall strive against the bent of our passions: but, where reason and religion call, the difficulty of the task is a motive to vigilance and resolution, not to remissness and neglect.

It is needless to point out the particular advantages, which would result from a conjunction of these virtues. Every one discerns, at first sight, that, if the inclination to do good, and the capacity of doing it meet, at once in the same person, they will mutually support and assist each other. Could we discern, on the one hand, all that warmth of benevolence, all those kind and amiable sentiments, which shine forth in the pride and bloom of youth;

on the other, that strength of judgment, that consummate prudence, which is the defence and ornament of age: how must such a character strike us with veneration! what happy effects might not be expected from it to each individual, who should share in its influence! what lasting benefit to mankind in general, from so eminent an example in virtue!

But it is high time to apply this subject more directly to our own use. It is incumbent on us, in a peculiar manner, both to be children in malice, and men in understanding. For the improvement of the understanding is the immediate end for which these societies were instituted: and the improvement of the heart is the necessary condition, without which the highest intellectual endowments are acquired in vain. And as we lie under peculiar obligations, we have also peculiar encouragement and opportunity, to unite in our characters extensive knowledge and fervent charity. It is not to be wondered, if men's tempers are soured by the crosses and disappointments of a busy and active life: but in these calm and retired shades, which are sacred to contemplation and peace, where we are designedly secluded from those pursuits which engage the bulk of mankind; what excuse, what pretence can we alledge for the prevalence
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and growth of unfriendly passions? The business in which we are employed, (or in which we ought to be employed) affords few occasions of competition: and will naturally inspire us with no other strife, than a virtuous emulation in the pursuit after knowledge; with no other ambition, than that of distinguishing ourselves by superior degrees of wisdom and goodness. The fruits and rewards of our industry are not, like those of other professions in life, private property: every acquisition in knowledge is an addition to the common stock, and increases the fund of literary wealth. Let us not then imitate the faults of others, whilst we are free from the temptations to which they are exposed. But let us make the best use of the opportunities we enjoy; and try to arrive at maturity of understanding, while we are yet infants in malice. *For though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels;—though we understand all mysteries, and all knowledge;—if we have not charity, we are nothing*.*

And as knowledge in general is vain or hurtful, when not attended with good will to mankind; so are all those parts of knowledge either frivolous or mischievous, which are incapable of producing any good effect. It

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* I Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

may indeed be questioned, whether any sort of true science can justly fall under this imputation. All its various branches apparently tend to the improvement of our faculties, or the regulation of our conduct, or the invention and cultivation of those arts, which multiply the conveniencies or the ornaments of life, and enrich the community of which we are members. But there is a spurious, a counterfeit wisdom, which is the source only of dissension and hatred, of vanity and folly.—It has often been objected to these seats of learning, that the maxims they instil, the arts they cultivate, the manners they form, are unfavourable to social life. That, instead of furnishing men with a large store of sound and useful knowledge, and enabling them to apply it to great and valuable purposes; they have trained up their disciples in all the idle pedantry of an empty and unprofitable erudition, of a vain and contentious Theology. That, instead of inspiring them with the brightest flames of piety to God and charity to man, they have too often kindled in their hearts, the blind rage of religious controversy, taught them to aspire at ecclesiastical fame by breaking through the ties of civil society, and qualified them to be leaders of sedition and faction, rather than ministers of peace and love.

Yet

Yet let not true knowledge lose her praise, from the indiscretion and folly of false pretenders: let not pure and undefiled religion partake in the censure which they incur, who unjustly assume the name and garb of religion. It is not knowledge, but ignorance, which makes men vain, and insolent, and impatient of contradiction. It is not religion, but impiety, which makes them dare to expect the favour of God, while they are subverting the repose and happiness of mankind. *The wisdom which is from above is peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy.**--This is the wisdom which we profess; this is the science we ought to study. And among all the various objects of our pursuit, there is none more great, perhaps none more difficult, surely none more important, either to ourselves or the world. The fruits of our other occupations are confined within a narrow compass: this only extends to every part of life, to every scene of things which can be offered to our view, to every private or public station to which we can possibly be called.

We should make it then our first and chief care, to secure the possession of this heavenly wisdom. But let us not stop here. The science

* James iii. 17.

science of the heart deserves the highest place in our regard: but no science will deserve our neglect, which is subservient to the same great end, the happiness of mankind.

And as we ought to consult the interests of society in the choice we make of our studies: so also should we use our utmost caution, to prevent the general ill effects of a studious and contemplative life; that it may neither render us unfit for the intercourse of the world, nor obnoxious to the dislike or contempt of those, who are engaged in different functions.—Let us strive then to adorn the dignity of our profession with all the graces of refined and cultivated humanity. Let us temper the severity of a philosophic retirement with the innocent cheerfulness of an active and social life. Let us smooth and soften the rigours of virtue by a prudent accommodation to the indifferent manners and customs of the age and country in which we live. Let us remember that we are citizens as well as scholars; and leave to monks and hermits the fond persuasion, that they shall merit Heaven, by tormenting themselves, and persecuting their brethren. Be it our task, to extend the bounds of science, to vindicate the honour of our holy religion, to form the minds of the rising generation to every private

vate and every social virtue. While these employments are discharged with fidelity and prudence, they can never expose us to disgrace and censure; nay, they will justly intitle us to protection and favour. And happy it is for us, that living as we do, under the influence of a wise and just government, we have no surer method of obtaining protection, than by deserving it !

P O R T E U S ' s
A C T S E R M O N .

TITUS ii. 6.

*Young Men likewise exhort to be sober-
minded.*



PORTEUS'S ACT SERMON.

TITUS ii. 6.

Young Men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.

THERE is scarce any subject of exhortation so necessary to youth, as that which is here recommended by St. Paul. Alacrity, emulation, benevolence, frankness, generosity, are almost the natural growth of that enchanting age. What it chiefly wants is something to regulate and temper these good qualities; and to do that is the province of *sober-mindedness*. Let not the young man be frightened with the solemnity of the name. It implies nothing unsuitable to his years, or inconsistent with his most valuable enjoyments. It tends to improve his chearfulness, though it may restrain his extravagances;
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to give the warmth of his imagination and the vigour of his understanding a right direction; to single out such enterprizes for him as are worthy of his natural vivacity and ardour; to prevent his talents and industry from becoming mischievous, his pleasures from proving ruinous, and to render his pursuits subservient, not only to present delight, but to substantial and permanent happiness,

It is evident that there is both a moral and an intellectual sobriety; a modest reserve, a rational guard upon ourselves, not only in acting, but in thinking: and the original word, σωφροσύνη, which we translate, *to be sober-minded*, includes both these kinds of sobriety. Its primary signification is, to be wise, prudent, temperate; and this wisdom chiefly consists,

I. In the government of the passions.

II. In the government of the understanding.

First then, we are commanded to teach young men the government of their passions.

To flee youthful lusts *, is an apostolical admonition, not very grateful perhaps to youthful ears; but so indispensably requisite both to temporal and eternal happiness, that it must, at all events, and by every possible means, be inculcated and enforced. It comprehends all those irregular desires, to the influence of which is owing much the greatest part of the vice and misery

* 2 Tim. ii. 22.

misery that desolate mankind. *From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, which war in your members**? From whence (may we add) come murders, frauds, breaches of trust, violations of the marriage-bed, ruin of unguarded and unsuspecting innocence, the distress and disgrace of worthy families, the corruption and subversion of whole kingdoms? Come they not all from one and the same impure source, from the violence of headstrong and unruly appetites, which in pursuit of some unlawful object, burst through all restraints of decency, justice, honour, humanity, gratitude; and throw down every barrier, however sacred, that stands between them and the attainment of their end?

The passions, then, must be governed, or they will govern us; and like all other slaves when in possession of power, will become the most savage and merciless of tyrants. But at what time shall we begin to govern them? The very moment surely, that they begin to raise commotions in the soul: the moment we know, from conscience, from reason, from revelation, that the gratifications they require ought not to be granted. This period may in some be earlier than in others; but it can scarce ever be later in any, than the usual time of being transplanted

* James iv. 1.

transplanted to this place *. Here then, you ought at once to enter on the disposition of your studies and the regulation of your desires. There is no danger of your undertaking so arduous and necessary a task too soon. If you hope to acquire any authority over your passions, you must inure them to early obedience, and bend them to the yoke while they are yet pliant and flexible. It will, even then, indeed be a difficult task. But what is there worth having that is to be obtained without difficulties? They are inseparable from a state of probation, and youth is the proper time for subduing them. In other instances, the obstructions you encounter serve only to stimulate your industry and animate your efforts; and why then not in this? Be the discouragements what they will, the consequence is not, that you ought to desist from the attempt, but, that you ought to begin the sooner. For these obstacles, instead of lessening, will grow upon your hands: every moment you delay, will but rivet your chains the faster, and give habit time to strengthen appetite. Besides, you have here advantages and helps towards this great work, which no other place, no other time, can afford. The retirement you enjoy from the great world, and the admirable order here established, were purposely meant to assist you

* Cambridge; where this sermon was preached.

you in the science of self-government, no less than in the acquisition of learning. The exclusion of all the most dangerous allurements to vice, of those amusements which excite the softer passions, of those cares and contests which provoke more violent emotions; the frequent and stated returns of divine worship, the exact distribution of time, the allotment of almost every hour to its proper employment, the necessity of a modest and uniform apparel, of temperate and public meals, of reposing at night under one common roof; all these things are most wisely calculated to keep the attention fixed on innocent and useful objects, to curb the imagination, to restrain extravagant desires, to induce habits of modesty, humility, temperance, frugality, obedience; in one word, *sober-mindedness*. It may be thought, perhaps, that the regulation of dress, and diet, and amusement, and such like trifles, are below the notice of a great and learned body. But it is a mistake to think so. Order and regularity in the minutest points, tend to introduce them, nay are necessary to introduce them, in the greatest; accustom the mind to restraint, and insensibly form it to the practice of vigilance and self-denial.

It is, in short, the excellent discipline established in these societies, which is their greatest glory, and must be their firmest support.

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It is what most eminently distinguishes the universities of Great Britain from all others in the world, and justly renders them the admiration of every one whom curiosity draws from other climates to visit them. This distinction, then, so honourable to ourselves, so beneficial to those we educate, it is of the utmost importance for us to maintain with inflexible firmness and resolution. We cannot, without some hazard, give up the smallest article of good government: but in those points which relate immediately to morals, the least relaxation must tend to subvert our credit, and even endanger our existence. In a place sacred to virtue and religion, no species of vice, no kind of temptation to vice, can, for one moment, be tolerated or connived at. We shall not be allowed to say in our defence, that we only keep pace with the manners of the age: this will be deemed our reproach rather than our excuse. It is our business, not meanly *to follow a multitude to do evil*; not to conform to the corrupt fashions of the times, but by our precepts and our example to fortify our young disciples against them. It is evident that the world expects from us a more than ordinary degree of watchfulness over our conduct. It expects that the correction of national abuses should begin here. And the expectation is not unreasonable. Whence should general reformation

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tion take its rise, if ever it rise at all, but from the two great sources of learning and religion? We are as lights set on an eminence, shining at present, indeed, in a dark place, in the midst of luxury and profusion, but able, perhaps, by degrees, to disperse the gloom of the surrounding prospect. If we cannot check the excesses of the present age, we may at least crush future extravagancies in their birth, by infusing into our youth those lessons and those habits of frugality, abstinence, and sober-mindedness, which are essential to the welfare both of the universities and of the state.

II. The other great branch of sober-mindedness, which we must recommend to young men, is the government of the understanding.

There is a great variety of intellectual errors, into which, without a proper conduct of the understanding, or in other words, without a sound and well cultivated judgment, the young student will be extremely apt to fall. Of these I shall single out only one, against which it seems at present more peculiarly necessary to caution him, and that is an insatiable thirst for novelty. The Athenians, we know, in the decline of their state, *spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing* *. In this respect, whatever may be the case

* Acts xvii. 21.

case in others, we fall very little short of that elegant but corrupt people; and the greater part of those who write for popular applause, are determined at any rate to gratify this extravagant passion. For this purpose they hold it necessary to depart as far as possible from the plain direct road of nature, simplicity, and good sense; which being unfortunately pre-occupied by those great masters of composition, the antients, and such of the moderns as have trod in their steps, leave them no room in that walk for the distinction at which they aim. They strike out therefore into untried and pathless regions, and there strain every nerve, and put in practice, every artifice to catch the attention, and excite the wonder of mankind. Hence all those various corruptions in literature, those affectations of singularity and originality, those quaint conceits, abrupt digressions, indecent allusions, wild starts of fancy, and every other obliquity of a distorted wit, which vitiate the taste, corrupt the morals, and pervert the principles of young and injudicious readers *. Hence too all those late profound discoveries—that to give youth a religious education is to fill them with bigotry and

* Certain eccentric compositions are here alluded to which were at that time (1767) much in fashion, and have as usual produced a multitude of wretched imitators of a species of writing which does not admit, and is not worthy of imitation.

and prejudice ; that the right way to teach morality is to make vice appear amiable ; that true wisdom and philosophy consist in doubting of every thing, in combating all received opinions, and confounding the most obvious dictates of common sense in the inexplicable mazes of metaphysical refinement ; that all establishments, civil or religious, are iniquitous and pernicious usurpations on the liberties of mankind ; that the only way to be a good Christian, is to disbelieve above one half of the Gospel ; that piety and self-government are duties not worth a wise man's notice ; that benevolence is the sum of all virtue and all religion, and that one great proof of our benevolence is to set mankind afloat in uncertainty, and make them as uneasy and hopeless as we can.

When these positions are thus collected together, and proposed without sophistry or disguise to a plain understanding, they appear more like the feverish dreams of a disordered imagination, than the serious assertions of sober and reasonable men. And yet they are notoriously nothing more than a faithful compendium of what some of the most favourite authors of the age, both foreign and domestic, avowedly recommend to us, as maxims of wisdom and rules of conduct. Were they actually adopted as such by the bulk of the people, it is easy to see what wild work they would make in society.

ety. In effect, the recent opportunities we have had in this island, of observing the ridiculous extravagances resulting from those principles, and the infinite absurdities of a practice formed on the too-prevailing system of modern ethics, are abundantly sufficient to convince us of their utter unfitness for the uses and the duties of common life, as well as for the purposes of the life to come. It behoves us, therefore, to guard our young disciples with the utmost care against this visionary fantastic philosophy, which owes its birth to the concurrence of much vanity and little judgment, with a warm and ungoverned imagination, and is studious to recommend itself by the united charms of novelty and eloquence. These are indeed to young minds attractions almost irresistible, but yet a right culture of the understanding will be an effectual security against them; and with some few improvements, there cannot, perhaps, be a better for that purpose, than the course of study marked out by the wisdom of the university to the youth of this place; and which, to their praise be it spoken, is pursued by them with astonishing application and success.

That judicious mixture of polite letters and philosophic sciences, which is the necessary preparative for their first degree, is admirably calculated at once to refine their taste, enlarge their

their notions, and exalt their minds. By beginning in the first place with classical literature, and improving the acquaintance they have already made with the best and purest writers of antiquity, they will insensibly acquire a relish for true simplicity and chastity of composition. They will learn strength and clearness of conception, accuracy, order, correctness, copiousness, elegance and dignity of expression. They will find that the most justly approved writers of our own times have formed themselves on those great models; and (as one, who well understood what originality was, expresses himself) they will perceive that, "a true genius is not any bold writer, who breaks through the rules of decency to distinguish himself by the singularity of his opinions; but one who, on a deserving subject is able to open new scenes, and discover a vein of true and noble thinking, which never entered into any imagination before; every stroke of whose pen is worth all the paper blotted by hundreds of others in the whole course of their lives *."

The cultivation of logic, at the same time, and the most useful and practical branches of the mathematics (which are excellent examples of severe reasoning and sagacious investigation)

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* Swift's proposal for correcting, improving, and ascertaining the English tongue; in a letter to Lord Oxford.

will also be of singular use in preserving our youth from error, in every subsequent part of knowledge. It will teach them to arrange, and methodize, and connect their thoughts; to examine the arguments of others with a nice and critical penetration; to pursue them through a long concatenation of dependent propositions, and discover whether any link in the chain of proofs be wanting; to distinguish sense from sound, ideas from words, hasty and peremptory decisions from just and legitimate conclusions. It will put them upon their guard against bold and novel opinions, especially if addressed to the imagination by strokes of wit, or to the heart by affecting descriptions, rather than to the understanding by sound and conclusive reasoning. By keeping their judgment in constant exercise, it will improve and strengthen that excellent and useful, but too little regarded faculty. It will instruct them in the several degrees of certainty, and the various kinds of proof, of which different subjects are capable; the just grounds of doubt, assent, or disbelief; the true limits and extent of the human understanding; that precise point, in short, at which our curiosity ought to stop, and beyond which, all is uncertainty, conjecture, and darkness.

The first suitable employment of our minds, thus improved, is to turn their new acquired sagacity

gacity inward upon themselves, and with the help of the best ethical writers, antient and modern, to make a careful inspection into their own wonderful frame and constitution. This leads us into the province of moral philosophy; by the aid of which we shall perceive more distinctly, the nature and true value of the rational, the social, the selfish, principles of action within us, and what tenor of life they point out to us as best accommodated to our circumstances, and calculated to produce the most substantial happiness. By leading young people early into such enquiries as these, many things may be taught them of unspeakable use to themselves and others, and many admirable rules suggested to them for the regulation of their future conduct.

After this survey of the moral, it is time to contemplate the wonders of the material world. The great volume of nature is therefore now thrown open to the student. He is led by the hand of science through all the useful and sublime discoveries of the Newtonian philosophy. He is made acquainted with the several properties of matter, in all its various forms and modifications, on this globe of earth; and furnished with principles for encreasing and improving the conveniencies of common life. He is then transported to distant planets and other worlds. He investigates the laws that govern

their revolutions, and the forces that retain them in their orbits. *He considers the sun when it shineth, and the moon walking in brightness* *. and all the host of Heaven standing in array before him: and sometimes extends his thoughts even beyond these, beyond the reach of sense, to new firmaments and new lights, rising up to his imagination, in endless succession, through the regions of unbounded space. But so far is he from being *secretly enticed* †, as some have formerly been, to convert his admiration of these glorious luminaries, into an impious adoration of them, that they serve only, as they naturally should do, to carry him up to their great Author, even the *Father of lights* ‡. He sees the Deity plainly written in these splendid characters, he derives from them the justest and most magnificent conceptions of his nature and attributes, and thus lays a firm and solid foundation for the superstructure of natural religion, which forms the next great object of his attention.

In the pursuit of this most important branch of knowledge, he will perceive how far the powers of nature and of reason are capable of going, in establishing those great fundamental truths of religion; the being of a God, a superintending Providence, a moral government
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* Job xxxi. 26. † Ib. xxxi. 27. ‡ James i. 17.

of the universe, the essential and unalterable difference between right and wrong, virtue and vice, a future state of existence and of retribution, and the obligations which such a system of things imposes on every rational agent to conform his conduct to the will of his Creator; as far as it can be collected from the constitution of the world, from the genuine sentiments of nature, the faculties of the human mind, and the attributes of the Deity himself. In these researches, he will find light enough to determine an honest and unprejudiced mind to the belief of all the above-mentioned momentous doctrines, and obscurity enough to make him earnestly wish for clearer evidence, and more authentic information, on subjects of such infinite importance.

After these enquiries, the student's next advance is to metaphysical speculations. These, it must be owned, have been but too often employed in undermining and subverting the clearest principles of morality and religion. But when carried only to a certain point, under the direction of a sound judgment and an honest mind, some knowledge of them may be attended with singular advantages *. It will secure

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* A very convincing proof of this we have lately had in that most masterly piece of reasoning, called, Divine Benevolence asserted, &c. by Dr. Balguy. Whoever has read this

the young student from being caught in the snares which sophists sometimes weave out of those delicate materials; will teach him to abstract and generalize, and simplify his ideas; will qualify him to drag out falsehood and scepticism from the midst of those obscure, and intricate, and crooked mazes, in which they love to wander; to detect the endless errors, into which excessive subtilty and false refinement must necessarily lead us; to perceive that a quick understanding may as easily miss the middle point where truth resides, by going beyond it, as a dull one, by falling short of it; and that there are in religion, as in all sciences, certain primary and fundamental truths, which are only obscured by much reasoning, and which, after having been once firmly established, should be laid up as first principles in the mind, where no subtle objections or acute distinctions should be allowed to weaken or destroy their force.

Thus do each of the several branches of learning, which compose the plan of education in this place, contribute something towards the *sober-mindedness* recommended by St. Paul. And, what is of still greater importance, the fund of knowledge

this with the attention it requires and deserves, will most earnestly wish that nothing may prevent the learned author from gratifying the public with that larger work, of which the treatise we are speaking of is only a small specimen.

knowledge which our youth will probably acquire in the prosecution of these studies, nay, even the very difficulties which may sometimes obstruct their progress, will gradually prepare their understandings for the admission of still nobler ideas, and sublimer contemplations. In their pursuit, more especially, of moral and religious truth, they will find, as I before remarked, so much wanting to give compleat satisfaction to the mind, that they cannot but see the absolute necessity of some more perfect system of doctrines and of duties, to supply the many defects of natural religion, to strengthen its obligations, to enforce it with proper sanctions, and to give it a vital and effectual influence upon the heart.

Under the impression of such reflections as these, it is obvious that there cannot be a proper time for carrying the young academic still one step further, and giving him some insight into the nature, the design, the evidences, and the precepts of the Christian revelation.

But here unfortunately we are obliged to stop. For this most important part of education no adequate, no public provision is yet made in this university. Revealed religion has not yet a proper rank assigned it here among the other initiatory sciences; is not made an

indispensable qualification for academical honours and rewards; has not, in short, all that regard paid to it, which its own intrinsic worth, and the peculiar circumstances at present attending it seem to demand.

It is well known, that an unbounded freedom is now indulged to the publication of the most licentious opinions; and that these are not, as formerly, confined to bulky volumes of infidelity, or to dull and phlegmatic reasoners, but are dispersed throughout the nation in the most commodious and pleasing vehicles, in works of fancy and amusement, and even useful information, which diffuse irreligion almost imperceptibly through the kingdom, and on which men of real genius do not scruple to waste their time and misapply their talents. These are the books most likely to fall into the hands, and to captivate the hearts, of young men of rank and fortune, at that very dangerous period of life, when they first leave their colleges to mingle in the great world; and on these, if they have not here been taught sounder principles and better things, they will most probably form their notions of religion, and regulate their future conduct. Add to this, that a very great part of those who are bred up among us to the church, and from whose pious labours we must chiefly hope for a remedy to these evils, are

are frequently obliged by the straitness of their circumstances, to enter on the ministerial office within a very short time after they have taken their first degree, and are, many of them, immediately engaged in large and laborious cures. If, therefore, they have not before this time acquired some tolerable knowledge of their profession, how can they undertake to explain the Gospel to others, and defend it against so many formidable opposers? In the two other learned professions law and physic, a regular course of study in the theory of each is generally deemed requisite, before those who engage in either, think it safe or creditable to venture on the practical part of their business. And it will be difficult, I conceive, to assign a satisfactory reason, why a competent fund of professional knowledge is not equally necessary to the divine, previous to his embarking in the various and laborious functions of his sacred calling; unless it be maintained, that the future salvation of mankind is a matter of less importance than their temporal property or their bodily health.

Does it not then seem highly adviseable for us to turn our thoughts a little more towards this great object, than has been hitherto deemed requisite? It is true, indeed, that some acquaintance

acquaintance with the abstruser sciences may be a very proper foundation even for theological learning. But it cannot surely be necessary to lay this foundation so exceedingly deep as is here generally done. It cannot be necessary to consume the flower and vigour of the youthful mind, in the very first stage as it were of its literary progress; to occupy it wholly for three entire years in these preparatory studies, when it should be going on to the *principles* and elements at least of the *doctrine of Christ**; should be advancing gradually from the foundation to the superstructure; should be learning under wise and experienced *master-builders*, to erect that sacred edifice of divine knowledge which must be its strong hold and fortress against the many adversaries it will soon have to contend with. If this great work is not carried on to a certain point, during the course of education in this place; when can we hope that it ever will? They who come here with a view to the means, not of acquiring but of adorning a fortune, no sooner quit this literary retirement, than they engage with ardour in the various pursuits of fashionable life, and have seldom either inclination or leisure for studies of a serious nature. They
who

* Heb. vi. 1.

who are destined to secular professions, or other active employments, find themselves after leaving this place, so fully occupied, first in learning, and then discharging the duties of their respective vocations, that they can scarce ever bring themselves to bestow that degree of attention on religious enquiries which their importance deserves. It is here, then, or no where, that this great object must be brought home to their thoughts, and made a part, an essential part, of their academic acquirements. And this necessity (as I have already remarked) is still more apparent with respect to those who are sent here to qualify themselves for the pastoral office; whose peculiar province and business it will be to instruct the people committed to their care *in the words of eternal life*, and who must therefore never expose themselves to the hazard of that insulting question, *Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not first thyself?*

It must be acknowledged, indeed, and it is acknowledged with pleasure, that in many private colleges, the great outlines of the christian dispensation are, by the excellent tutors with which this place abounds, explained and illustrated in a very able manner to their respective pupils. But if there be any weight in
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what has been here suggested, it will be well worthy of our consideration, whether something more than this is not now become necessary, whether it will not be highly suitable to the dignity, the sanctity of this truly respectable and learned body, to lend the whole weight of their authority to so good a cause; to assist private instructions by *public incitement*; to give some signal *academical encouragement* to this branch of knowledge, something that should make the cultivation of it not only highly reputable, but indispensably necessary. And fortunately for us, the way is easy and open to the execution of any such design. That noble spirit of emulation, which so eminently distinguishes the youth of this place, and pushes them on to the most wonderful attainments in the abstrusest sciences, affords us an opportunity, which no other seminary in the world can furnish, of raising whatever fruit we please from so generous a stock. We have only to make revealed religion *an essential part of university learning*, and assign to it a proper share of the usual honorary rewards, and it will soon be pursued with the same ardour of mind and vigour of application, as all the other parts of literature. The current of study amongst us, which was generally thought to run too strongly towards mathematical subjects, has of late years, by
means

means of the excellent institutions in favour of classical learning, been, in some degree, diverted into another and more useful course. By the method here proposed, (or any other of the same tendency which should be judged more eligible) there would be more, and that a still nobler channel opened to it : and some few of those many hours, and those fine talents, which are still, I fear, too lavishly wasted here on abstract speculations, in the most precious and improveable part of life, would be then more profitably employed in learning the rudiments of evangelical truth ; and thereby enabling one part of our youth to preserve their religious principles uncorrupted by the artifices of infidelity, in their future commerce with the world ; and the other part to become powerful defenders, and successful dispensers of the word of God *.

This

* Since the first publication of this sermon, some advances has been made towards the accomplishment of the author's wishes. Mr. Norris, a gentleman of fortune in Norfolk (into whose hands some extracts from this discourse happened to fall) left by his will a few years ago, a rent charge of a hundred guineas a year, for the establishment and maintenance of a professor in the university of Cambridge, for the sole purpose of reading lectures to the students there, on the Christian revelation. To this he added twelve pounds a year for a medal and some books, as a premium for the best prose English essay on the same subject. It would be a real consolation to the friends of religion, and especially to those whose province it is to examine candidates for orders, if these well-meant

This university had, in the conclusion of the last century, the honour of giving birth to a stupendous system of philosophy, erected by its great disciple NEWTON, on the immoveable basis of experiment and demonstration; which, by degrees, supplanted and overthrew a visionary though ingenious representation of nature, drawn by fancy, and supported by conjecture. Animated with this success, let it now endeavour to push its conquests still further into the regions of ignorance and error, to banish from the kingdom the extravagant conceits of modern scepticism, no less destitute of all foundation in truth, utility, and sound reasoning, than the philosophical romance of Descartes; and to establish for ever in the minds of the British youth, a religion founded not on "*the enticing words of man's wisdom,*" but on "*demonstration of the spirit and of the power of God**.

This will be to promote, in the most effectual manner, the benevolent purposes of those great and pious benefactors we are now going to commemorate; whose *first object* in these magnificent foundations was, undoubtedly, the advancement

meant institutions, in conjunction with any other subsidiary one which the wisdom of the university might think fit to adopt, should in due time effectually answer the great purposes enlarged upon and recommended in the preceding pages.

* 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5.

advancement of religion; who, with a true greatness of soul, carried their views forwards into *eternity*, and plainly meant, that in these elegant retreats, we should not only lay the foundations of immortal fame on earth, but qualify ourselves for obtaining, through the merits of our Redeemer, a real and truly glorious immortality in Heaven.

SECKER'S

S E C K E R ' s
I N S T R U C T I O N S
G I V E N T O
C A N D I D A T E S
F O R
O R D E R S,
After their subscribing the ARTICLES.



S E C K E R ' s
I N S T R U C T I O N S
G I V E N T O
C A N D I D A T E S
F O R
O R D E R S,
After their subscribing the ARTICLES.

Gentlemen,

YOU have now made the subscription, by law required. And as, in so doing, you have acknowledged the liturgy and articles of the church of *England* to be agreeable to the word of God; I hope you will think yourselves bound, as you are, to be careful, that the instructions which you give, and the doctrines which you maintain, in public and in private, be agreeable to that liturgy and those articles : that you neither contradict, nor omit
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to inculcate and defend, on proper occasions, the truths, which they contain.

In the next place I exhort you to spend a due share of the remainder of this day, in what, I trust, hath employed not a little of your time already ; weighing diligently the nature and importance of the undertaking, in which you are about to engage ; forming suitable resolutions ; and earnestly begging that grace of God, which alone can *make you able ministers of the New Testament* *.

Nothing is better fitted to assist you in this good work, than the office of ordination, of Deacons or Priests, as you are respectively concerned. You must certainly have read it over, before you offered yourselves. Since that, you have been directed to read it again. But I desire you to peruse it once more this afternoon with your best attention, that you may join in it to-morrow with a greater degree of rational seriousness ; and particularly, that you may answer on more deliberate consideration, the questions, which will then be put to you. For there can hardly be a case, in which either insincerity, or even thoughtlessness, would carry in it heavier guilt.

And that you may be in no perplexity concerning the meaning or fitness of any part of the office, it may be useful to go through some parts

* 2 Cor. iii. 6.

parts of it along with you beforehand, proceeding as they lie in the book.

The first thing which candidates, both for Deacons and Priests orders, after they are presented, are required to do, as distinct from the rest of the congregation, is to take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy. For, as you are to be ministers of the church established by law in this nation, it is evidently reasonable, that the civil government, established by law, should be assured of the fidelity and affection of persons to whom it gives and secures privileges and profits; and who are intrusted with the care, amongst other matters, of making men good subjects. Now these oaths bind every person, who takes them, to *honour the King**, and by consequence all that are put in authority under him, both in word and deed; and to *lead, in subjection to them, quiet and peaceable lives*†. That these things may with a good conscience be promised and performed, there is no just cause of doubt. But if any one thinks there is, he ought to apply for satisfaction; and till he receives it he ought to abstain from taking the oaths. *For whatever is not of faith is sin*‡; and in this case it would be no less than perjury. Nothing is a plea sufficient for committing any sin, much less one so heinous: not even all the force, that can be used. But here is no shadow
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* 1 Pet. ii. 17.

† 1 Tim. ii. 2.

‡ Rom. xiv. 23.

of force. You are come voluntarily to offer yourselves, well knowing that the oaths must be tendered to you; that is, you have made it your choice to take them.

But by your subscription you have entered into a further obligation; to use the liturgy in all your public ministrations*: and therefore, to pray for the King by name, for his long life and prosperity, for his obtaining victory over all his enemies. God forbid that any one, who doth this, should be disaffected to the government, under which we live. And if we are friends, it is both our duty and our wisdom to show that we are. For thus we shall strengthen an establishment, on which under God, the safe enjoyment of our religion intirely depends; we shall procure the support, which we cannot but be sensible that we want, and we shall silence, or at least confute those, who love to speak despitefully against us on this head.

After the oaths, candidates for deacons orders are asked: *Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and ministration?* A solemn question, and which ought to be well considered, before it is answered. Observe then: it is not said *do you feel*; have you an immediate perception of such an impulse from the Holy Ghost, as you
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* Can. 36.

can distinguish from all other inward movements by its manner of impressing you : but, *do you trust* ; are you on good grounds persuaded ? What then are the proper grounds of such persuasion ?

In the first place, if he hath not moved you effectually to live *soberly, righteously, and godly**, you may be sure he hath not moved you to assume the office of a minister in God's church. Examine yourselves therefore strictly on this point : a most important one to all men ; but to you, if possible, above all ; and before you presume to officiate in his house, ask your hearts, do you transgress, do you omit no duty, wilfully or knowingly ? Have you a genuine practical faith in Christ ? Are you on the terms of the gospel covenant, intitled to everlasting life ? But supposing that you are, more is requisite in the present case : and what more, the latter part of the question points out. *To serve God, for the promoting of his Glory, and the edifying of his Church.* This then being the design of the office ; if so far as you know your own hearts, this is your motive to desire it ; and if, so far as you can judge of your own abilities and attainments, they are equal to it in some competent degree : then you may safely answer, that *you trust you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take it*

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upon

* Tit. ii. 12.

upon you. For we can ~~have such trust to Godward~~ only through Christ, who hath sent us the spirit : we are not sufficient to do or think any thing as of ourselves : but our sufficiency is of God *. Together with this principal motive, of serving God by edifying his people, you may allowably have the subordinate one, of providing a decent maintenance for your own support, and for those who may belong to you : but if you are indifferent or cool about the former, and attentive only or chiefly to the latter : since you cannot think that such dispositions are approved by the Holy Spirit, as proper for the ministry, you will be guilty of lying to him †, if you affirm, that he hath moved you to enter on it with them. Therefore inspect your souls thoroughly ; and form them, by the help of divine grace, to be duly influenced by the right principle, before you venture to answer this question : which is very wisely made the leading one ; because your inducement will be the rule of your behaviour, and probably also the measure of your success.

The next question, put to those who apply for deacons orders, and the first to such as have received them, and desire to be admitted priests, is, *Do you think, that you are truly called, according*

* 2 Cor. iii. 4. 5.

† Acts v. 3.

according to the will of Christ, and the due order of this realm, to the ministry of the Church? That is, are you conscious neither of any defect in body or mind, nor of any other impediment, which may, for the present, if not for ever, be, according to the laws of God or man, a just obstacle in your way? Such things may escape our knowledge or memory. Therefore we call upon you to inform us. And you are bound to answer with sincerity.

It is not requisite, that I should enlarge on every question; though it is, that you should weigh every one seriously. That, which recites the duties of deacons, may seem to have some difficulty in it; as it assigns to them occupations, which the Acts of the apostles do not, in the history of their appointment*; and as they are but little employed now in the single business there allotted to them. But that passage of scripture plainly was intended to set forth, only the immediate and urgent reason of ordaining them, not the whole of what was, then or soon after, given them in charge. For we find in the same book, that Philip the deacon both preached and baptized†. And the qualifications, required in deacons by St. Paul‡, intimate very clearly, that more

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things

* Acts vi. † Acts viii. 5.--13, 26--40. ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 8--13.

things must, even then, have been incumbent upon them, than administering to the relief of the poor. Accordingly, from the primitive ages downwards, they are described as performing occasionally most of the same offices, which they do now; and being, what their name denotes, assistant and subservient to priests in all proper employments*. And the less they are engaged in their chief original one, the more opportunity and the more need they have, to shew diligence in the other good works, belonging or suited peculiarly to their station.

The next question is common to candidates for each order: *Will you fashion your own lives, and those of your families, so far as in you lieth, to be wholesome examples to the flock of Christ?* This extends to avoiding in your own behaviour, and restraining in theirs, follies, levities, mean and disreputable actions, as well as crimes and vices. The apostle enjoins *Deacons and their wives, to be grave*†; much more then ought priests. He enjoins every Christian to *abstain from all appearance of evil*‡. And our blessed Lord enjoins all his disciples to be *wise*, as well as *harmless*§. Therefore govern yourselves and yours by these rules: and consider

* See Bingham's Orig. Eccl. l. 2. c. 20. † 1 Tim. iii. 8, 11.

‡ 1 Thess. v. 22.

§ Math. x. 16.

sider frequently, whether you observe them well. For without it you will neither gain esteem, nor do good.

The last question, put alike to the whole number of candidates, is, *Will you reverently obey your Ordinary, and them to whom the government over you is committed?* You would be bound to this, though you were not to promise it: for both reason and scripture demand it. Still more firmly you will be bound, when you have promised it, though it were of small importance. But it is of very great, not only to the dignity and ease of your superiors, but to your own interest, and the benefit of the whole Church. Our Saviour both commands, and prayed for unity amongst his followers in the most expressive terms*. Without union, there cannot be a sufficient degree, either of strength or beauty: and without subordination, there cannot long be union. Therefore *obey*, as the apostle directs, *them that have the rule over you*†; and promote their honour, their credit, their influence. This will make us abler to serve the cause of religion, and protect you. And God forbid that, so far as we

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are

* John xiii. 34, 35. xvii. 11, 12, 21, 22, 23.

† Heb. xiii. 17.

are able, we should ever fail to be willing and zealous.

In the office for the ordination of priests, after a pious and awful charge, which I recommend to your most serious attention, follow several questions of the greatest moment, your answers to which, I hope, you will remember to the last day of your lives, In these answers, besides what hath been already mentioned, you promise, that *the doctrine and discipline of Christ, as contained in scripture, and received in this church and realm,* shall be the standard of your teaching and acting; and every thing contrary to them be faithfully opposed by you: that you will *use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within your cures; and that, as frequently and fully as need shall require, and occasion be given.* You promise also, that *you will be diligent in prayers and reading the Holy Scriptures;* which by the preceding exhortation evidently appears to mean private prayer and reading; *and in such studies, as help to the knowledge of scripture; laying aside the study of the world and the flesh;* that is, not making, either gross pleasures, or more refined amusements, even literary ones, unconnected with your profession, or power or profit, or advancement or
 applause,

applause, your great aim in life; but labouring chiefly to qualify yourselves for doing good to the souls of men, and applying carefully to that purpose whatever qualifications you attain. Further yet, you promise, that *you will maintain and set forwards, as much as lieth in you, quietness, peace, and love among all Christian people; and especially among them, that are, or shall be committed to your charge.* By this you oblige yourselves, never to raise or promote personal, family, parochial, ecclesiastical, political, or any other animosities; but to discourage, and if possible, compose and extinguish them; than which you cannot perform a more Christian part, or one more conducive to your honour and your usefulness.

But, besides pondering well beforehand these answers, which you are to make, I earnestly beg you, to read and think them over often afterwards; and particularly, at each return of the Ember weeks, to examine yourselves, as in the presence of God, whether you have made good the engagement, into which you entered at your ordination. So far as you have, this practice will afford you the greatest possible comfort; so far as you may have failed, it will suggest to you the most useful admonition.

After these questions, a short silence is appointed to be kept for the secret prayers of the congregation, that God would enable and incline you to do what you have undertaken; which blessing, I hope, you will ask at the same time for yourselves very earnestly. Then follows a Hymn of considerable antiquity; and to be repeated with much reverence, on account of the important petitions and doctrines comprized in it, though it be altogether void of ornament in that old translation, which we still retain. Next to this, follows a very proper address to the throne of Grace, pronounced by the bishop alone, in the name of the whole assembly; which is instantly succeeded by the act of Ordination.

The first words of that, *Receive the Holy Ghost*, were used by our Saviour to his apostles, immediately after he had said, *as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you* *. God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him †: and he was able to bestow what measure he pleased, both of spiritual gifts and graces, upon others. He meant however, by this benediction, to confer only the ordinary ones: for the extraordinary, you know, were reserved

* John xx. 21, 22.

† John iii. 34.

served till after his Ascension. Far be it from the bishops of his church, to claim, even in respect of the former, the powers which he had. But still these words in our mouths, when spoken over you, properly express, in the first place, the communication of that authority which proceeds from the Holy Ghost. For we read, that *the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them**: and that the latter of these exhorted the elders of the church of Ephesus, *Take heed to the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers†*. They also express, in the second place, your earnest request to the Father of mercies, that you may, at all times, enjoy such proportions, both of the graces and gifts of the Spirit, as will be needful for you; which request, if it be not your own fault, will prove effectual; because having, in the common course of his providence, appointed us, though unworthy, to act in this behalf, he will assuredly be ready to own and bless our ministrations.

It follows very soon: *whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.* These
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* Acts xiii. 2.

† Acts xx. 28.

again are the words of Christ to his apostles, immediately after the former. But he did not grant to them the power, either of retaining the sins of penitent persons, or of forgiving the impenitent. Nor do we pretend to grant, by uttering them, all the powers which the apostles had in this respect. They had *the discernment of spirits**; and could say with certainty, when persons were penitent, and consequently forgiven, and when not†. They were able also to inflict miraculous punishments on offenders; and to remove, on their repentance, the punishments, which had been inflicted. These words will convey nothing of all this to you. But still, when we use them, they give you, first, an assurance, that according to the terms of that Gospel, which you are to preach, men shall be pardoned or condemned: secondly, a right of inflicting ecclesiastical censures for a shorter or longer time, and of taking them off; which, in regard to external communion, is retaining or forgiving offences. This power, being bestowed for the edification of the church, must be restrained, not only by general rules of order, but according to the particular

* 1 Cor. xii. 10.

† Acts viii. 21, 23.

ticular exigencies of circumstances. And our church wishes, with much reason, for circumstances more favourable to the exertion of it*. But how little soever exerted, the power is inherent in the office of priesthood. And though we are no more infallible in our proceedings and sentences, than temporal judges are in theirs; yet our acts, as well as theirs, are to be respected, as done by competent authority. And if they are done on good grounds also, *whatever we shall bind or loose on earth, will be bound or loosed in Heaven**. Nor will other proofs of repentance be sufficient in the sight of God, if submission to the discipline of the church of Christ, when it hath been offended, and requires due satisfaction, be obstinately refused, either from haughtiness or negligence.

To these words is subjoined the concluding charge: *and be thou a faithful dispenser of the word of God, and of his holy sacraments*. This then is the stewardship committed to you. And you cannot but see in what a profane and corrupt age it is committed to you: how grievously religion, and its ministers, are hated or despised; how lamentably both
they,

* Office of Communion.

† Matth. xviii. 18.

they, and its other professors, are degenerated and divided. Your business will be, each within the sphere of his influence, to prevent these things from growing worse; which, bad as they are, they still may; and if possible, to make them better; or at least, to recover or preserve such, as you can, from the general depravity. But you will never succeed in your attempts for this purpose, either by bitterness against infidels, heretics, and sectaries, or by contempt and ridicule of enthusiastic or superstitious persons. The only right method is a very different one; diligent study, to fit yourselves more completely for teaching and vindicating the truths of Christianity: scriptural and rational instruction, assiduously given, with zeal and mildness duly tempered, and suited to the capacities and condition of your hearers: a willing and devout and affecting performance of all sacred rites, whether in the church or elsewhere; but above all, a behaviour, innocent, humble, peaceable, disinterested, beneficent, abstemious, discreet, religious.

Take heed therefore to your steps; and walk in the present evil days with such piety and caution, that, as the office exhorts, *you may neither offend, nor be occasion that others offend;*

*offend; but may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion * against you; that they who are of the contrary part, and falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ, may be ashamed† of themselves; or however that your master and judge may not be ashamed of you† at the great day, but pronounce over each of you, Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord §.*

* 2 Cor. xi. 12.

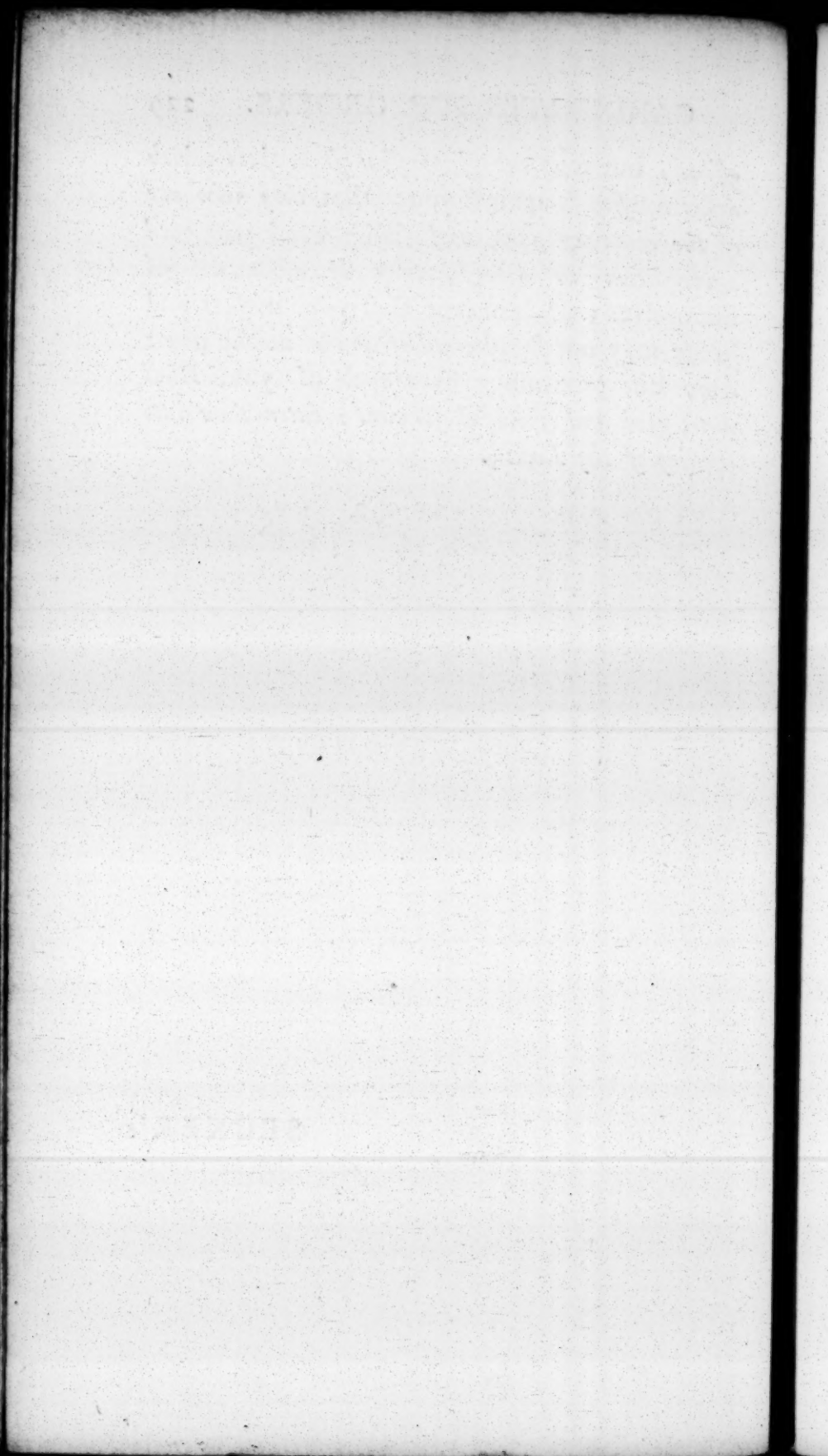
† Tit. ii. 8.

I Pet. iii. 16.

‡ Mark viii. 38.

Luke ix. 26.

§ Math. xxv. 21.



SECKER's (Bp. of *Oxford*)
FIRST CHARGE
TO THE
CLERGY of his DIOCESE.



THE
C H A R G E
OF
THOMAS Lord Bishop of OXFORD,
TO THE
CLERGY of his DIOCESE,
IN HIS
PRIMARY VISITATION
1738.

Published at Their REQUEST.

Reverend Brethren,

I AM very sensible, that you cannot meet together on this occasion, without making deep reflections on the loss, which you have suffered, for the public good, by the removal of a pastor, whom the experience of so many years hath taught you to esteem and honour

honour so highly. It is your farther unhappiness, that he is succeeded by a person, very unequal to the care of this conspicuous and important diocese. But your humanity, and your piety will, I doubt not, incline you, both to accept and to assist the endeavours of one, who can assure you, with very great truth, that he is earnestly desirous of being as useful to you all, as he can; and seriously concerned for the interests of religion, and of this church. Would to God there were less need of expressing a concern for them, than there is at present !

Men have always complained of their own times; and always with too much reason. But though it is natural to think those evils the greatest, which we feel ourselves; and therefore mistakes are easily made, in comparing one age with another; yet in this we cannot be mistaken, that an open and professed disregard to religion is become, through a variety of unhappy causes, the distinguishing character of the present age; that this evil is grown to a great height in the metropolis of the nation; is daily spreading through every part of it; and, bad in itself as any can be, must of necessity bring in most others after it. Indeed it hath already brought in such dissoluteness and contempt of principle in the higher part of the world, and such profligate intemperance,

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intemperance, and fearlessness of committing crimes, in the lower, as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal. And God knows, far from stopping, it receives, through the ill designs of some persons, and the inconsiderateness of others, a continual increase. Christianity is now ridiculed and railed at, with very little reserve; and the teachers of it, without any at all. Indeed with respect to us, the rule, which most of our adversaries appear to have set themselves, is, to be, at all adventures, as bitter as they can; and they follow it, not only beyond truth, but beyond probability; asserting the very worst things of us without foundation, and exaggerating every thing without mercy; imputing the faults, and sometimes imaginary faults, of particular persons to the whole order; and then declaiming against us all promiscuously with such wild vehemence, as, in any case but ours, they themselves would think, in the highest degree, unjust and cruel. Or if sometimes a few exceptions are made, they are usually made only to divide us amongst ourselves; to deceive one part of us, and throw a greater odium upon the other. Still, were these invectives only to affect us personally, dear as our reputations are and ought to be to us, the mischief would be small, in comparison of what it is. But the consequence hath

hath been, as it naturally must, that disregard to us hath greatly encreased the disregard to public worship and instruction; that many are grown prejudiced against religion; many more, indifferent about it and unacquainted with it. And the emissaries of the Romish church, taking the members of ours at this unhappy disadvantage, have begun to reap great harvests in the field, which hath thus been prepared for them by the labours of those, who would be thought their most irreconcilable enemies.

Yet, however melancholy the view before us appears, we have no reason to be discouraged; for let us take care of our duty, and God will take care of the event. But we have great reason to think seriously, what our duty on this occasion is; and stir up each other to the performance of it; that where-ever the guilt of these things may fall, it may not fall on our heads. *For it must needs be, that offences come: but woe to that man, by whom the offence cometh* *. Our grief for the decay of religion might be attended with much comfort in regard to ourselves, could we but truly say, that no faults or infirmities of ours had even given advantages against it. But though, God be thanked, we are far from being what our adversaries would represent us; whose reproaches

* Matth. xviii. 7.

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proaches perhaps were never less deserved, than now when they are the most violent ; yet, it must be owned, we are not by any means, even the best of us, what we ought to be. And the present state of things calls loudly upon us, to correct our mistakes, to supply our deficiencies, and to do all we are able for the honour of God, and the happiness of mankind.

If we can be unconcerned now, we have neither piety nor common prudence in us. And if we are concerned in earnest, we shall be very desirous, both to avoid all wrong methods of showing it, and to make use of all right ones.

Complaining of our superiors for those evils, which perhaps they cannot prevent ; or complaining of them with disrespect, for what we may apprehend they could prevent, would both be undutiful and imprudent conduct : would give our adversaries joy, and do our cause harm. Indeed to beg earnestly of God, that He would direct the hearts of those, who preside over the public welfare ; and humbly to represent to them, on all fit occasions, the declining state of religion, the importance and the means of preserving it ; these things are unquestionable duties. But then we must always approve ourselves, at the same time, conscientiously loyal both in word and deed ; reasonable

sonable in our expectations ; sincerely grateful for the protection, which we are assured of enjoying ; and duly sensible, that every thing of value to us in this world, depends on the support of that government, under which we now live. We cannot be good men, if we are bad subjects : and we are not wise men, if we permit ourselves to be suspected of it.

A second proper caution is, That to speak unfavourably of liberty, religious or civil, instead of carefully distinguishing both from the many abuses of them, which we daily see ; or to encourage any other restraints on either, than public utility makes evidently needful ; can only serve to increase that jealousy, which, being in former ages grounded too well, hath been most industriously heightened, when there never was so little pretence of ground for it ; that the claims of the clergy are hurtful to the rights of mankind. It concerns us greatly to remove so dangerous a prejudice against us, as this : not by renouncing those powers, which the Gospel hath given us ; for we are bound to assert them ; but by convincing the world, that they are perfectly innocent ; and avoiding all appearance of assuming what we have no right to : by showing our abhorrence of tyranny, especially over the consciences of men ; and satisfying them fully, if possible, that *we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus,*

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Jesus, the Lord; and ourselves, their servants for his sake *. Then, with respect to the privileges, that we derive from human authority, as, on the one hand, receding from any of them without cause is only inviting fresh encroachments, and giving needless advantages to such as will be sure to lose none; so, on the other, straining them too far is the likeliest way to destroy them all at once; and both our usefulness and our security depend very much, on our appearing plainly to desire nothing inconsistent with the common good; to have the truest concern for all reasonable liberty, and to be zealous only against licentiousness and confusion.

Thirdly, If we should be tempted to oppose profaneness, by encouraging the opposite extreme of superstition; this also would be unjustifiable in itself; would have bad effects upon as many as we might mislead; and give great opportunities to all that should see them misled, either of accusing religion, or exposing us, as corrupters of religion. Not that we are to give up inconsiderately, whatever some persons are pleased to charge with superstition; for there would be no end of concessions at that rate; but only to avoid encouraging any thing, that can be justly charged with it; and then we shall stand upon sure ground. For nothing can be more unjust,

* Cor. iv. 5.

unjust, than those imputations of it, which our adversaries are so fond of throwing, some upon Christianity itself, others on the doctrine and worship of that Church, of which, through God's merciful providence, we have the happiness to be members.

Another very pernicious error would be, if we should think to serve our cause by intemperate warmth in it. Christian zeal indeed is a duty, that never was more needful, and never less shewn. But passion will do no good. If expressed against those, who are indifferent about religion, it will turn them into enemies: if against the enemies of religion, it will make them yet more vehement enemies. Besides, the extravagant things that men say and attempt against us and our profession, are not always designed injuries; but frequently the effects of misrepresentations and prejudices, that have imperceptibly taken hold on persons, who otherwise mean tolerably well. Now mildness to such as these, is but justice: and to all others, it is prudence. Railing is the province, which our adversaries have chosen: and let us leave it to them. For whatever success they may meet with that way, as indeed they excel in it, we shall meet with none: but only make the spirit of Christianity be misunderstood and ill spoken of, by our own want of it. Therefore, how injuriously soever we may be treated, let us return neither injurious
nor

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nor harsh treatment for it: nor endeavour to mark out those persons for objects of popular hatred, who are ever so unwearied in labouring to make us so. Yet at the same time we must never court irreligious men by wrong compliances; never contribute to increase their power of doing harm; never desert our duty, either for fear of them, or favour from them. But then let us defend both religion and ourselves, with that fairness and decency, as well as courage which becomes our function: acknowledge ingenuously whatever can be alledged against us with truth, only claiming equitable allowances; and where charges are untrue, yet use mild expostulations, not reproaches; and try to shame our opposers by the reasonableness of what we say, rather than exasperate them by the vehemence of it. They indeed have little cause either to complain or to triumph, if, under such gross provocations as they give, our temper sometimes fails: but we have great cause to do our utmost, that it fail not.

And if undue severity of speech must be forbidden towards professed enemies; much more to those, who may, for aught we know, design themselves for friends. Indeed, when it is evident, that men only put on a pretence of wishing well to Christianity, or the teachers of it;

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and

and whilst they affect to charge us with uncharitableness for questioning their sincerity, would despise us for believing them; there we must be allowed to see what plainly appears; and to speak of them, both as adversaries, and unfair ones. Or when doctrines, whatever the intention of propagating them be, are inconsistent, either with the whole, or any part of our religion; it is no uncharitableness, but our duty, to lay open the falsehood and the danger of them. Nay, supposing only the legal establishment of religion, or some branch of it, be attacked, yet the attempt may both be injurious enough to us, and detrimental enough to the public, to deserve a vigorous opposition. But to shew passion and bitterness in any of these cases; to take pleasure in making men's mistakes or designs thought worse than they are; to judge harshly of them with respect to another world, or expose them to ill usage in this; to refuse them due allowances for human infirmity, or be more backward to own their merits, than to see their faults: such behaviour, instead of promoting truth, will prejudice the world against it; will give unbelievers dreadful advantages, and for ever prevent that union amongst Christians, which would procure us, above all things, the esteem of men, and the blessing of God.

From

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From these improper methods of supporting religion, let us now proceed to the proper ones. And they will naturally fall under the general heads, of our instructions and our lives.

Giving instruction requires knowledge. And therefore, as a competent degree of it is justly expected of persons, before they enter into holy orders: so, when they enter, the care of making a continual progress in it is solemnly promised by them, and covenanted for with them. What may be a very good beginning, is by no means a sufficient stock to go on with; and even that will lessen, if no pains be taken to increase it. Continued application then is a duty of importance. Persons of lower abilities and attainments are in danger, without it, of being useless and despised; and they, who set out with greater advantages, are bound to endeavour at doing, in proportion, greater services to the church of God. Without exception therefore, all who are engaged in so serious an employment as ours, if they have any regard, either to their duty, or their character, must take care not to be more remarkable for their diversions than their studies; nor indolently to trifle their time away, instead of employing it to good purposes. And though most parts of learning will be useful to us,

and all parts ornamental; yet we must be sure to remember, what we have been solemnly admonished of, that no attention to any thing else, ought ever to draw us away from the pursuit of such knowledge as is properly theological. For to excel in other things, and be deficient in that, cannot but cast a grievous reflection; either on us, for not studying what we profess; or on our profession, as having little in it worth studying. Our principal business therefore must be, to obtain a thorough acquaintance with the Christian faith: first the grounds, then the doctrines of it. And the previous qualifications for attempting this are, a due knowledge of the rules of right reasoning, and of the moral and religious truths which nature teaches; of the state of the world in its earlier ages, and in that when Christianity first appeared. These preparations being made, the great thing requisite in the next place, is a diligent search into holy scripture. For there it is, that both the authentic system of our belief, and the chief evidence for it, are exhibited to our view. Scripture therefore, above all things, the infidel endeavours to ridicule; the mistaken Christian, to wrest in support of his errors: and if we desire, either to confute them, or to satisfy ourselves; our only way must be, to understand

stand it well. For which end it is quite necessary, that we make the original language, at least of the new Testament, familiar to us: and were that of the Old more commonly studied, the advantages would be very considerable.

In order to see clearly, on what grounds our belief stands; together with the sacred volumes themselves, the writings of such learned persons, as have proved their authority, and vindicated their accounts of things, must be carefully read; and attentively compared with those objections against them, which have been revived of late, dressed up with so much art, and spread abroad with so much diligence. For in our present circumstances we are always liable to be attacked: and consider, what an unhappy triumph it would afford, should we be found unprovided of a rational defence. It is very true, the general evidence, which we have for our faith, is abundantly sufficient of itself, to overbalance many difficulties concerning it, and ever so many cavils against it. But yet our being unqualified to give more particular answers, where they can be given; as indeed there are few cases, where they cannot; may often prove a great reproach to us, and a great stumbling-block to others.

Next to the grounds of religion, the doctrines of it, especially the more important and disputed ones, ought to be studied, with such diligence and impartiality, as may best discover to us the nature of every opinion, and the force of every argument: that so we may neither load Christianity with what doth not belong to it; nor betray, instead of defending it, by giving up what doth; but faithfully *keep that which is committed to our trust**, both entire and unmixed. To secure this great end, we must ever adhere strictly to the word of God, fairly interpreted by the help of all such means as Providence hath given; and carefully avoid, on the one hand, fondness of novelty; and on the other hand, over-great reverence of antiquity, especially such as comes short of the earliest. But against the former of these, it is peculiarly needful to caution the rising generation; whom the rashness of youth, and the petulant spirit of the present age, too often hurries into a strange vehemence for any imagination, which they have happened to take up; and prompts them to fly out against established doctrines, without having always the patience even to understand them. Such therefore should be exhorted to learn a proper degree, both of silence and suspense, till cooler thought,

* 1 Tim. vi. 20.

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thought, and farther inquiry, make them fitter judges of things. But besides those controversies, to which this caution chiefly relates; that between the papists and us deserves at present to be well studied, by such of you, as live in the neighbourhood of any. For seldom have they shown more zeal, or more artifice, than of late, in their attempts of making profelytes. And therefore it is of great consequence, that we provide ourselves against them, with a sufficient knowledge of their real doctrines, their most specious pleas, and the proper answers to them. Another subject, with which we are concerned to be well acquainted, is what relates to the government and worship, discipline and establishment of our own church. Different parts of our ecclesiastical constitution are frequently censured, by different sorts of persons, with very different views: though indeed the most opposite of them have appeared, for some time, unaccountably disposed to unite against us; and believers to join with infidels in using their Christian brethren ill. It may therefore be of great use, to inform ourselves diligently concerning every thing of this nature, which is spoken of to our prejudice; and be always ready to shew the genuine state of the case with mildness and fairness. But no controversies,

however needful, must be suffered to divert our attention from what is of all things the most needful, the study of practical religion, and of the common duties of life. These are the things, which mankind are most apt to fail in, and most concerned not to fail in; and therefore spending much time upon them, obtaining a thorough insight into them, and having a deep sense of them, is the very foundation of doing good, both to others, and to our own souls.

A competent provision of knowledge being supposed, the next thing is communicating it to those who are under our care, in such manner as their circumstances require.

The proofs of religion, both natural and revealed, all men should be taught, and especially at present, in the most intelligible and convincing manner. As for the objections against either: such as it may be supposed they have thought or heard of, should be distinctly answered; but the rest obviated only, as occasion offers. For to enter into them farther, would be mispending time. Next to the truth of religion, they should have its importance laid before them. The necessity of a moral life most men will own in general terms; only what they are pleased to call so, is often a very immoral one, both with respect to their fellow-creatures, and the government of themselves.

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selves. But regard to piety is strangely lost, even amongst persons that are otherwise tolerably serious. Many have laid aside all appearances of it: and others, who would seem to keep them up, do it with evident marks of indifference and contempt. It should therefore be industriously shewn and inculcated, that an inward sense of love and duty to God, founded on just conceptions of him, and expressing itself in frequent acts of worship, constant obedience and resignation to him, is in truth *the first and great commandment* *, the principal and most important of moral obligations. But then, besides those instances of piety, which reason requires of us, there are others, founded on relations, equally real, and consequently deserving equal regard, enjoined by revelation. The utmost care therefore ought to be used, considering the present disposition of the world, to convince men of what moment the doctrines and duties of the Gospel are. To make reason sufficient for nothing in religion, is to overturn every thing. But to insist on its insufficiency for many most valuable purposes, which revelation is fully sufficient for, and on the necessity of observing whatever God hath thought fit to command, this is doing but common justice, though a

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very

* Matt. xxii. 38.

very seasonable piece of justice, to the doctrine of our blessed Saviour, and the authority of our Maker.

When once men are brought to understand the value of Christianity, the next thing is, to give them a proportionable sollicitude for it: to make them observe, how visibly the belief and practice of it decay, and how dreadful the consequences must be, and are: to shew them, that religion is not the concern of the clergy merely, but the common concern of all men; the great thing, on which public and private happiness depends in this life, as well as eternal felicity in the next; that therefore, if they have any value for these important interests, they must take the necessary means of securing them; their children, their servants, and dependants must be diligently watched over and instructed; private devotion must be practised, family-worship revived, and the service of God in the church regularly and seriously attended upon. For laying aside these things hath almost banished religion from amongst us; and nothing, but restoring them, can bring it back. Piety is indeed seated in the heart; but to give it no vent in outward expression, is to stifle and extinguish it. Neglecting the public exercise of religion, is destroying the public regard to it; and teaching men to despise

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spise their own form of religion, is enough very often to make them despise it under any form.

Great pains have been taken by our adversaries to give the world an ill opinion of religious instruction; and we must take equal pains to give them a good one of it; by representing to them, both the natural influence it hath, and the divine authority that enjoins it. But after all, the only effectual conviction will be that of experience. And therefore the chief point is, to endeavour that men may feel the benefit of our teaching; feel at least, that it is their own fault, not ours, if they do not become the wiser, the better, and happier for it. To this end, we must all dwell often and strongly on the great duties, and great failures of duty, in common life: first explaining the obligations of religion, so as that they may be practised; then insisting on it, that they must: entering into the particulars of each with such plainness, that every one may clearly see his own faults laid before him; yet with such prudence, that no one may so much as imagine himself personally pointed at: and taking the strictest care, that no part of what we say may seem in the least to proceed from our own passions, or our own interests; but all appear evidently to flow from a true concern for the good
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of those that hear us. Diligent consideration, what our subject and our several characters will bear us out in, must direct us, when to give our judgment with diffidence, when to lay stress upon it : in what cases to *exhort with all long-suffering** ; in what, to *rebuke with all authority*†. But whichsoever we do, neither our language should be florid, nor our manner theatrical : for these things only raise an useless admiration in weak persons, and produce great contempt in judicious ones. Nor yet on the other hand, should our expressions be mean, or our behaviour lifeless ; but both must be suitable to the employment we are upon ; both be such as come naturally from the heart of the speaker, and therefore will naturally move that of the hearer.

To this our public teaching it will be a great help, and indeed a valuable part of it, if we perform the several offices of our excellent liturgy devoutly and properly ; neither with an irreverent precipitation, nor a tedious slowness ; neither in a flat and languid manner, nor yet with an affected liveliness, or a vehemence ill-placed or over-done ; but so as may best express the sense, and the importance of what we read ; and, by shewing our own attention to it, engage that of all around us.

Besides

* 2 Tim. iv. 2.

† Tit. ii. 15.

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Besides our general instructions, it is very needful, that we give the youth under our care, in particular, an early knowledge and love of religion, that may abide with them; and stand the trials, to which their riper years will of course be exposed. I hope you are all diligent in that most useful work of Catechising; and have done your utmost to prepare for Confirmation, those whom you present to me. And I earnestly recommend it to you, that the good impressions, which may well be supposed to have been made upon their minds at this season, be not suffered to wear off again; but be improved into settled habits of religion and virtue, by still farther exhortations, and leading them, as soon as possible, to the holy communion. But, though all the youth deserve our peculiar attention; yet if any of them be educated in charity schools under our inspection, for these we should think ourselves still more nearly concerned, than for the rest; and, by first taking care, to have them taught whatever is proper, and nothing else, then making known the good management they are under, put an end to those accusations, of their learning idleness and pride, superstition and disloyalty; which may have been sometimes one of them, sometimes another, in some degree deserved; but have been carried with a wicked industry most shamefully beyond truth, and lessened

lessened the credit of this excellent institution, even with many good persons, to the great detriment of Christianity.

Another very useful method of spreading the knowledge of religion, and teaching men a serious regard to it, is by distributing, or procuring to be distributed, such pious books, especially to the poorer sort, as are best suited to their capacities and circumstances. For there is great variety of them to be had; and at so very low prices, that much good may be done this way to considerable numbers at once, in a most acceptable manner, for a trifling expence.

But nothing will contribute more to make our public instructions effectual, than private conversation, directed with prudence to the same end. The better we are known to persons, the greater influence we may hope to have upon them; and the better we know them, the more distinctly we shall see how to make use of that influence to good purposes. By representing proper truths, at fit times, with a modest freedom, we may very much abate the prejudices of men, who have any fairness remaining, both against religion and ourselves: at least we may prevail on them, for the sake of public order, and example, to keep within the bounds of decency; and so prevent their doing harm, if we cannot make
them

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them good. Persons, that err in particular points, of doctrine, friendly discourse may shew us what led them into their mistakes, and enable us to lead them out again. Such as dissent from our church-government and worship, talking amicably with them, and behaving in the same manner towards them, if it doth not immediately bring them over, may however bring them nearer to us, both in judgment and affection. Such as are faulty in their moral conduct, serious and affectionate remonstrances, given in private and kept private, and joined with a tenderness to their characters in public, may often do a great deal towards reforming them; and sooner or later, the seed thus sown may spring up in their hearts, and produce happy fruits. We should not indeed press upon persons, when there is no other prospect than that of provoking them: but we ought to watch all opportunities, whilst there is any hope left; and not only make it our endeavour to convert the mistaken and vicious, but stir up the negligent to serious thought, and the good themselves to more eminent goodness. Especially such persons of rank and influence, as we find well disposed, these we must earnestly excite to appear and give countenance to the cause of religion, ever remembering that awful declaration of our blessed Lord: *Whoever shall be ashamed*
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of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy Angels *. We must convince them of the urgent necessity there is, for interposing in behalf of piety and virtue; and suggest to them the means for engaging with success in this excellent employment. Yet must we never spend so much of our attention on the higher part of the world, as to give the least suspicion of neglecting the lower; whose number is so much larger, whose dispositions are usually so much more favourable to religion, and whose eternal happiness is of equal importance to them, and ought to be of equal concern to us; but we must prove we are in earnest in our work, by making it our care, as it was our master's, that *the poor have the gospel preached to them* †. And one opportunity of preaching it with singular advantage, both to the poor and the rich, is when sickness brings near to them the view of another life. At some times indeed the sick may be incapable of attending to exhortations: at others they may be endangered by them: and at all times great prudence is requisite, to avoid the extremes, of terrifying or indulging them too much. But, provided due caution be used in these respects;

* Mark viii. 38.

† Matt. xi. 5.

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pects; laying before them what they ought to be, and reminding them to consult their own consciences what they have been, is a most likely method of exciting in them such affections and resolutions at that season of recollection and seriousness, as through the blessing of Heaven, may produce the happiest effects.

To these excellent offices, therefore, we must all of us chearfully apply ourselves, each in such degree as his station requires. If they do require pains, if they do take up time, if they are inconsistent with agreeable amusements, and even interrupt useful studies of other kinds; yet this is the business which we have solemnly chosen, and the vows of God are upon us; it is the most important and most honourable, it ought to be the most delightful too of all employments: and therefore we have every reason not to seek the means of evading our duty, but of fulfilling it; and each to *take the oversight of the flock of God*, committed to him, *not by constraint, but willingly**. For if we only just do what we can be punished by our superiors for neglecting, we must neither expect success nor reward.

But then to secure either, the chief thing requisite is still behind; that our own tempers and lives be such, as we say those of other
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* 1 Pet. v. 2.

persons should. For if we, who teach religion, live, or suffer our families to live, with little or no sense of religion, what can we possibly expect, but that men will improve so palpable an advantage against us to the utmost; will argue, that we believe not our own doctrine, and therefore it deserves no belief; or, we practise not our own precepts, and therefore they cannot be practised? Thus we shall increase that infidelity and wickedness, which our business is to oppose. Too much of it will be really owing to us; and the whole will be laid upon us. The enemies of religion will have the best pretence in the world to ruin us; and the friends of it will grow unconcerned for us, and ready to give us up to them. But, were these consequences not to follow, still very bad ones must follow. Men, irreligious or vicious themselves, cannot be hearty in opposing irreligion and vice; they cannot do it with boldness, if they were hearty; and could they be ever so bold, it must sit much too ill upon them, to have any good effect. Wrong-minded persons will be furnished with the most plausible excuse imaginable for disregarding them intirely; and the rightest-minded persons that ever were, cannot, if they would, regard them as they ought. This will be the case, even with respect to their public teaching: and as for private admonitions, they will seldom have

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have the face to venture upon them, and never succeed in them; whereas every word, that comes from an exemplary man, hath great weight; and his bare example is most valuable instruction of itself. But, were a bad life not to hinder at all the success of our ministry; yet we must remember, it will absolutely hinder the salvation of our souls: and subject us to that *softer punishment, of which he may well be thought worthy, who, teaching others, teacheth not himself, but, through breaking the law, dishonoureth God* *.

Nor is it sufficient by any means for us to be guilty of no vice. This is small praise, for one of our order. We are bound to be patterns of the most diligent practice of virtue, and the strictest regard to religion: and we shall never make others zealous for what we ourselves appear indifferent about. It is very true, that, peculiarly in our case, the generality of the world both expect and find fault, quite beyond reason; and doubtless they are much to blame in doing so. But then surely we are no less to blame, if, when we know the severity, with which our conduct will be examined, we do not watch over it with equal severity ourselves; and take the only way to be looked on as good men, that is, being such undeniably.

And

* Heb. x. 29.

Rom. ii. 21. 23.

And whoever hath a due sense of this obligation, will conscientiously *abstain*, not only *from all evil*, but, *all appearance* of it too *. Such a one, for instance, far from offending against temperance, will be noted for it; and think the imputation of being *mighty to drink wine* † almost as infamous as that of being overcome by it. Far from being remarkable for luxury and delicacy in his manner of living or appearing, he will be sure to preserve himself, on all occasions, at least as remote from indulgence, as he is from austerity. And though he will never disgust the persons, with whom he converses, by a gravity affected or ill-timed: yet he will be equally careful, never to expose himself, by a lightness of carriage unbecoming his function; nor let any thing be a part of his character, much less a distinguishing part, that can only tend to lower it. For we can never be useful, if we are despised: and we shall be despised, if we give opportunities for it. Even they, who seem well pleased with us, will think meanly of us inwardly; and perhaps of the whole order, for our sakes.

Yet at the same time we may be greatly mistaken, if we aim to avoid contempt by haughtiness; which will only add hatred to it. Our rule therefore must be, to express, in every thing,

* 1 Thes. v. 22.

† 1s. v. 22.

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thing, condescension to the lower part of the world, without being improperly familiar; and respect to the upper, without being servile: recommending ourselves at once to the love and esteem of both, by a mild kind of dignity and ingenuous simplicity, kept up through our whole behaviour. Mildness of temper is the duty of every man: but especially required of us*; and absolutely necessary, both to our preserving regard, and doing service in the world. Therefore, whatever provocations we meet with from those, amongst whom we live, as indeed we often meet with great ones, it neither belongs to our character, nor will be for our interest, to take offence and express resentment; but by prudence and patience to *overcome evil with good*†. For we shall often do it this way, and never any other. Instead of being engaged in enmities of our own, it should be our endeavour to compose the differences of other persons; not by intermeddling in their affairs, when we are not called to it; but by laying hold on every fit opportunity given us, for disposing them to a mutual good opinion, where there is room for it; or at least, to mutual good-will. Too many occasions indeed for friendly interposition, our unhappy party-disputes furnish us with, had we no other. Entering

* Matth. x. 16. 1 Tim. iii. 3. 2 Tim. ii. 24. † Rom. xii. 21.

tering into these with vehemence, and that injustice which never fails to accompany vehemence, is what all men should avoid ; but we, who must caution them against it, should avoid it with uncommon care ; should religiously pay that respect to every one which is their due, especially to our superiors ; think well of men's actions and designs, unless we have evident cause to think otherwise ; judge with modesty, where perhaps we are not qualified to judge ; and whatever our opinion be, preserve our behaviour inoffensive ; give the least provocation, that may be, to bad men of any side ; and act in such manner, as may gain us, if possible, the united esteem of good men of all sides. For theirs is the friendship, of which we ought to be ambitious. Familiarities with prophane and vicious persons, beyond what necessary civility, or a real prospect of reforming them requires, will, whatever we may promise ourselves from their favour or interest, always discredit and weaken us in general ; and much oftner prove hurtful, than advantageous, to any of us in particular. But to cultivate the good opinion of the wise and virtuous, to recommend ourselves to their protection, and, whatever else they may differ about, engage their common zeal in the common cause of religion ; this will procure us both security and honour,

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honour, and every way promote the great design of our profession.

Another point, on which our character will not a little depend, is our being, in a reasonable degree, disinterested. A very large proportion indeed of the clergy have too much cause to endeavour at bettering their circumstances; and it is barbarous treatment, to accuse them for it, instead of pitying them. But overgreat sollicitude and contrivance for advancing ourselves will always make impressions to our prejudice, let our condition be ever so low: though deservedly much stronger impressions, in proportion as it is higher. We shall be thought to have no attention, but that of which we discover too much: and the truth is, *we cannot serve two masters* *. Nor will it be sufficient, that we avoid the charge of immoderately desiring more; unless we avoid also that of selfishness, in the management of what we have already; a matter, in which it is very difficult, and yet very important, to give no offence. We are bound, both to those who belong to us, and those who shall come after us, to take a proper care of our legal dues; and preserve them faithfully from the encroachments of such, as tell us very truly, that we ought not to be worldly-minded; but forget what is equally true, that they themselves ought

* Matth. vi. 24.

ought not to be so. But then the strongest reasons of all kinds oblige us, never to make unjust or litigious claims; never to do any thing, either hard and rigorous, or mean or sordid: to shew, that we desire always the most easy and amicable method of ending disputes; and whatever method we may be forced to take, never to let any thing force us into the least degree of unfairness, passion, or ill-will; but endeavour, by all instances of friendly behaviour, to win, if possible, upon the person we have to do with; at least to convince every body else, how very far we are from intending wrong to him, or any one.

And nothing will contribute more, to acquit us from the suspicion of being selfish in our dealings with other persons, than approving ourselves charitable to the poor: a virtue which becomes us so extremely, and is so peculiarly expected from us, and will give us so valuable an influence; that we should willingly straiten ourselves in almost any thing besides, that to the full proportion of our abilities, we may abound in giving alms. And together with this, would we but, each in his station, take the best care we can to see justice done them in that provision, which the law hath intended for them, it would generally prove a much more considerable benefaction, than all that we are able to bestow on them of our own.

To

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To the above-mentioned instances of right conduct, we must always add, what will render them very engaging, the occasional kind offices of good neighbourhood; with a decent hospitality also, if our circumstances will permit it; and then, notwithstanding the censures of those, who complain that we are of little use, and endeavour to make us of none; we may surely well hope to do service to God, and be esteemed of men; especially if, together with so exemplary a behaviour towards others, we are friendly and compassionate, candid and equitable amongst ourselves.

Great injustice, I am satisfied, is done us on this head; and many groundless accusations brought confidently against us, by persons, who neither enquire into facts, nor consider circumstances. But there are few things, in which it concerns us more, to clear ourselves where we are faulty. For so long as we are thought in the world, either insolent to our inferior brethren in general, or void of generosity and pity to such of them as we employ; we must not expect to receive better treatment, than we are understood to give. And if we are believed to be chargeable, beyond other men, with mutual bitterness and vehemence, when any kind of controversy rises amongst us; this too is a character, so very different from that which ought to be ours, that the utmost care should be

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taken to guard against it. Not that we are obliged, either to speak of or behave to men of bad lives, or bad principles, as if they were good ones, because unhappily they belong to our order. Making no distinction would be on all accounts wrong; and making a proper distinction will be very useful. But then we should never think worse of our brethren, than evidence forces us; never publish our ill opinion, without sufficient reason; nor exceed, when we do publish it, the bounds of moderation: we should be ready to shew them all fitting kindness, even whilst they continue blameable; and receive them back with the most charitable tenderness, when they return to their duty. For there is no manner of need, that we should give either so much advantage or so much pleasure to the adversaries of religion, as to let them see those, who should be the joint-defenders of it, engaged in domestic wars: and bringing such charges, and raising such prejudices, one against another, that it is hard to say, whether believing or disbelieving our mutual accusations will make the world think worse of us. Our blessed Lord therefore, after reminding his disciples, that *they were the Salt of the Earth*; were designed, by the purity of their doctrine and example, to keep others from corruption; and after giving them that prophetic warning, which we shall find men zealous to fulfil, that

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*if the Salt have lost its Savour, it shall be cast out and trodden under Foot**; resuming the same figure at another time, concludes his exhortation thus, *Have Salt in yourselves, and have Peace one with another†.*

To these things, Brethren, if we have any concern for the interests of religion or our own, we must always industriously attend; but especially in such times, as by no means admit of negligence or mismanagement. Yet vain will our best endeavours be, unless we constantly add to them our fervent Prayers, that God would enable and strengthen, both us, and all that serve him in the Gospel of his Son, to perform our duty with faithfulness and success. *For we are not sufficient to think any thing of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God‡.* What therefore we ought, every one of us, to beg of him at all times, let us all at present jointly address to him for, in the comprehensive and expressive words of our public service.

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole Body of the Church is governed and sanctified; receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before thee for all

M 2

Estates

* Matt. v. 13.

† Mark ix. 50.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 5.

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estates of Men in thy Holy Church; that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve thee, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

* Second Collect for Good Friday.

WARBURTON's

WARBURTON'S
S E R M O N

ON THE
INFLUENCE of LEARNING on
REVELATION.





WARBURTON'S
S E R M O N
O N T H E
INFLUENCE of LEARNING ON
REVELATION.

LUKE xviii. 8.

— *When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find
FAITH on the Earth?*

THIS is one of those fatal MARKS expressive of the latter fortunes of the Christian Church, as foretold, in the sacred writings, amongst the signs of the second coming of the *Son of Man*. And with this, many other of those signs now concurring, seem, in the opinion of serious men, to point out to us the near approach of that awful period; the completion of the *moral*, and the renovation of the *natural* system of things.

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But the labour of the Christian Divine will be perhaps better employed in searching out the natural causes of the rising disorders in the Church of Christ, than in hazardous conjectures about Futurity; altho' laid open to him in some measure by the import of those *marks*, which the predicted evils are supposed to bear.

And indeed, if he have not this discretion, his speculations will sometimes, as in the case before us, be rudely called off from the prophetic matter, to other considerations, in which the honour of *Christianity* is more immediately concerned.

A late noble writer *, who, together with the religion of his country, hath attempted to erase from the minds of men the very idea of all that goes under the name of Religion, hath, amongst his discoveries of the FIRST PHILOSOPHY, laid down the following maxim, "That since the revival of learning in the West, and the consequent practice of thinking for ourselves, the CHRISTIAN FAITH hath kept gradually decaying; and men have given less and less credit to its pretensions †. From hence he would infer, and not illogically on such a gratuitous

* LORD BOLINGBROKE.

† *The resurrection of Letters was a fatal period: the Christian system has been attacked and wounded too, very severely since that time. — And again, Christianity has been in decay ever since the resurrection of Letters.* — LORD BOLINGBROKE, *on the study and use of history*, Vol. i. p. 182. and 185. Octavo Edition.

tuitous principle, that the religion of *Jesus* false."

I propose therefore to debate this matter with him ; a point of the utmost importance to the honour of Revelation.

His Lordship's proposition may be expressed in plainer terms, " That the more the world has advanced in real knowledge, the more it has discovered of the intenable pretensions of the Gospel."

To expose the futility of his maxim, I shall first of all shew, that it was not IGNORANCE which gave the Gospel its early credit : Which is a presumption, at least, that KNOWLEDGE hath not since hurt it.

NOW CHRISTIANITY arose when KNOWLEDGE was at its height, in the latter part of the *Augustan* age ; and in the very centre of human learning, *Rome, Greece, and the Lesser-Asia*. Neither was it propagated in confederacy with Sophists or Philosophers ; but in direct defiance of all their eloquence and reasoning ; over which, after a sharp conflict of FAIR ARGUMENT, it at length compleatly triumphed : Nor, again, under the protection of civil Rulers, or the Imperial authority ; for these were all combined to its destruction ; some with the arms of human learning and Philosophy, as MARCUS ANTONINUS and JULIAN ;

but the far greater part with the more peculiar argument of tyrants, the sword of the executioner: Yet these, likewise the Gospel, after a still sharper conflict of PATIENCE and SUFFERING, brought over to the side of Truth and Reason.

But what need we more? We have the noble Author himself giving testimony to the fact; and in his *usual way*, destroying his own system of political philosophy. He not only confesseth, that at the publication of the Gospel, the gentile World was highly advanced in knowledge, but that this knowledge facilitated the reception of its truths. Speaking of this very æra, he says, — “Polytheism was mitigated; Idolatry was in good measure distinguished away, amongst the Philosophers at least. Oracles and the Arts of Divination grew into contempt; and if heathenism was kept up by men above the vulgar, it seemed to be so only by the Priests for lucre, and by others for fear of having no religion at all. THUS THE WAY WAS PREPARED BY REASON FOR REVELATION in the Countries where Christianity first appeared, and which were enlightened by Philosophy*.” But his Lordship goes further; he not only confesseth that this learned age was favourable to the success of Christianity, but that it was most

* *Bolingbroke's works*, Quarto Edition. Vol. iv. p. 373, 4.

most adapted to its GENIUS; since, those who published it chose rather that it should be submitted to the examination of REASON, than forced upon the world by the weight of AUTHORITY. “ It is plain (says his Lordship) “ that the first publishers of *Christianity* did “ not rest the cause primarily or solely on “ AUTHORITY of any kind. It is plain that “ they submitted the Gospel, and the Authority of those who published it, to the examination of REASON, as any other system even “ of divine philosophy ought to be submitted *.”

After this, to talk of any real advantage the Gospel can gain by *ignorance*, or any real hurt it can receive from *knowledge*, is reckoning much upon the advantage of favourable hearers.

Another *presumption* that knowledge is not injurious to the interests of religion, was the later conduct of the MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL. The noble Writer, whose suggestion I am here opposing, hath thought fit to represent them as a set of knavish politicians combined together to support Revelation as the best system to advance the wealth and power of their order. But whether Revelation be a divine truth or a commentitious fable; whether the order be ministers of religion,

* Vol. iv. p. 267.

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religion, or confederates in iniquity, it is at least certain, that men who have devoted their time and talents to the service of this institution must needs be best acquainted with its nature, and with the means most proper to advance, or to retard its interests. And this their superior knowledge will admit of no dispute, if, as is pretended, Revelation was their INVENTION : for they could not but be very intimate with the work of their own hands. Now it is remarkable, that when divers accidental causes had concurred to revive learning in the West (not the least of which was the protection and encouragement the Clergy afforded to the exiled Greeks) this order was amongst the first, as soon as ever it had given any signs of returning life, to cherish and support it; to raise and restore it to its ancient dignity and splendor; one amongst them in particular having done more in this service than all the Laity of that age together. I need not tell the learned hearer that I mean ERASMUS *. The inference I would draw from

* There is one circumstance in the life and character of this excellent person, that distinguishes him with advantage from most others, even of the greatest eminence in letters; and will for ever endear his memory to the wise and good. His zeal for the interests of learning and religion was equally warm and constant. To serve the first, he began with discrediting the MONKS, the mortal enemies of reviving letters. He pushed them with all the vigour of his wit; and
seemed

from it is this, that had the clergy, who best understood the mutual effects which *learning* and

seemed resolved to give no quarter to that ignorance which was become the mother and nurse of all the bigotry and superstition, which most dishonoured and defiled religion. In this attack on the established barbarity of the times, he succeeded so well, as to bring good letters into fashion : to which he gave a new splendor by preparing for the press correct editions of many of the best antient writers both ecclesiastical and prophane. But his labours were not yet ended. He had a new adventure to undertake. He lived to see the *zeal* for letters, which he had been so instrumental in promoting, carry the *VIRTUOSI* of *Italy* into an opposite and yet more ridiculous extreme than the *monkish*, when he first set upon laughing ignorance out of the world. The Italian Latin writers (and almost every body then was a Latin writer) from their dread and horror of monkish barbarisms, would use no word, not even when they treated of the highest mysteries of religion, but what had been consecrated as it were in the capitol, and dispensed to them by the sacred hand of *TULLY*. Erasmus observed the growth of this folly with the greater concern, as he thought he saw under all their fondness for the language of old *Rome*, a growing libertinage, which disposed them to think slightly of the Christian FAITH ; and, what is still stranger, gave them even a reverence for the absurdities of the old Gentile worship. Now, this opposite extreme, he thought it equally his duty to expose : which he hath done in that immortal work intitled *CICERONIANUS* : and done so effectually, that the public was soon brought back to that just medium which he had been all his life endeavouring to mark out for their observance : Purity, but not pedantry in letters ; and zeal, but not bigotry, in religion. In a word, the employing his talents of genius and literature on subjects of general importance declared him a TRUE CRITIC ; and his opposing the extremes of all parties in their turns declared him an HONEST MAN.

and *revelation* must have upon one another, been apprehensive that LETTERS would prove injurious to the FAITH, which it was, it seems, their *peculiar* interest to support; so cunning politicians had never acted so absurd a part as to promote learning when it was in their power to suppress it. Yet they did support it. And with no great assistance from the laity, advanced to that degree of eminence in which our fathers have seen it.

I know it hath been pretended, that in this service the clergy were passive; that they entered into it with reluctance; that they went heavily with the current, which then ran strongly to the advancement of science. But they who say so, know little of the history of those times. It is true, the poor *Monks* in the midst of all their blindness, saw well enough the havock learning would make throughout all the quarters of superstition: and therefore employed their weak endeavours to stop the progress of it. But what was the issue? They made themselves doubly ridiculous: for the learned clergy were not now content to despise, they found it necessary to expose their ignorance. Soon afterwards indeed the world was surprised with the sudden rise of a more formidable order of religious, the JESUITS; who
perhaps

perhaps had been well pleased to have acted their parts like their predecessors, in the shade of cloistered ignorance. But the matter was then too far gone. These politic fathers, if you will, were indeed forced to swim with the stream : but they went in it with so good a grace, that few have more effectually contributed to the advancement of learning. In a word, this was the *general spirit* of the christian clergy, both of the friends and enemies of *Rome*, that from the time in which *letters* gave the first symptom of recovered life, to the present, they cherished them with a zeal and assiduity next to what they used in the support and defence of their more peculiar charge, *religion*.

What then must we conclude, but that they thought, and still think, that the christian faith is much benefited by the application of human learning to its service, they were not mistaken, as I shall now endeavour to shew.

For, from these PRESUMPTIONS, I proceed to a DIRECT PROOF, that as the infant growth of the Gospel was not retarded by that flourishing state of knowledge which saw it in its birth ; so the revived knowledge of these latter ages did greatly support the established honours of revelation, by illustrating its primeval truths.

Since the more careful cultivation of natural and moral science, PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY,
and

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and ANTIQUITY, have all contributed to spread a new light over the evidences of it.

In *natural philosophy*, more exact enquiries have been made into the contents of the superior covering of the terraqueous globe; the peculiarities of whose arrangements give the strongest evidence to the Mosaic account of the deluge*. And the immortal theory of *Newton* absolutely demonstrates that intimate relation which *Moses* speaks of, between the *Creator* and his *work*.

Profane history, the more nicely it is examined, the more clearly it discovers, through all its corruptions, an exact and surprizing conformity with the *sacred*: It affords a vast number of precious monuments that serve to illustrate

* The contents of the ocean are found, in a petrified state, all over the terrestrial part of the globe: and in places more distant from those in which they were first formed. I say they are found over all the earth, but not in all sorts of soils indifferently. And from these two circumstances considered together, an incontestable proof of the truth of the Mosaic relation, I think may be deduced. Had these adventitious fossils not been found in every quarter of the globe, we could not conclude the deluge to have been *universal*: and had they been found in all kinds of soils indifferently, we might suppose them to be (what they were once commonly thought) the natives of those narrow beds in which they are discovered, and a kind of *lusus naturæ*. But when we see them spread over every climate, and yet only in such soils as are proper for the preservation of *foreign bodies*, we rightly conclude them to be the deposit of a deluge of waters which covered the whole face of the earth.

illustrate those obscurities in holy writ, which time and the universal change of manners, both social and civil, have unavoidably occasioned amongst men.

The science of *antiquity*, which is properly conversant with the manners and customs of ancient times, supports the general credit of sacred scripture, by illustrating those internal marks that prove the high antiquity to which they pretend.

The science of *morals* hath been more successfully pursued, and more happily investigated, since the revival of letters, than at any other period whatever. And this, reflected upon gospel-morality, hath thrown such a lustre on the purity of its nature ; on the utility of its general direction, and on the truth of revelation principles, as shews its original to be indeed divine.

True knowledge being thus friendly to the FAITH, you will naturally expect, I suppose, to find the great masters of science confirming what is here said, by their warm attachment to REVELATION. The expectation is not unreasonable. And you have the pleasure to see every great name amongst the laity, such as BACON, BOYLE, NEWTON, GROTIUS, SELDEN, SYDENHAM, PASCHAL, and LOCKE, no less respectable for their sincere belief of *christianity* than for their profound knowledge
in

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in their several professions. Nor should you suffer yourselves to suspect that the weight of this argument is at all diminished if there be others, accounted in the rank of learned men, who have affected to think slightly of the religion of their country. For when the matter is to be decided by authority, Hobbes I suppose will not be opposed to Newton, or Spinoza to Bacon. Much less would any one compare Toland with Grotius, or Tindal with Selden, or Coward and Morgan with Harvey and Sydenham.

If then true science hath thus advanced the credit and glory of REVELATION, by the nature of its principles, and the sentiments of its professors; and if yet there hath been, ever since the revival of LETTERS, a gradual defection from the faith, we must seek for the causes of this apostasy in something else than in a SUPERABUNDANCE OF KNOWLEDGE. And a fair inquiry, I persuade myself, they will not be difficult to find.

We have just seen, how one division of the learned world, into the GREAT and the SMALL *philosophers*, contributes to the credit of religion: another, into the MORAL and the IMMORAL, would no less support its honour, were it not too invidious a task to oppose these to one another, by name. But the various instances may be safely trusted to every man's

own

own recollection. For who hath not observed that in the learned world every the most virtuous person hath been most eminent for his adherence to *Revelation* : and that such who have distinguished themselves in the cause of *free-thinking* have been generally as remarkable for the free indulgence of their passions. Nor is it at all strange, that, when men have nothing to hope, and much to fear from a religion proposed to them as true, they should for their own ease be willing to find, or, if that fails, to suspect it to be false. And when once men are in this disposition, they will never want objections to FACTS established by the fullest evidence; or to DOCTRINES supported by the strongest reasoning.

But, it will be said, perhaps, “ Why did not this natural, tho’ unreasonable, prejudice appear sooner ? Men have been always vicious, and have ever since the first appearance of *christianity* been made uneasy in their vices.”

The fact is true. But the answer to the question easy. We are to consider that, for many ages preceding the restoration of learning, SUPERSTITION had invented a thousand expedients to evade the threats of religion against a wicked life ; to reconcile the difference ; and to make salvation consistent with the practice of habitual immorality. So that bad men were under no temptation to quarrel with
the

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the evidences of their faith, in order to enjoy their vices in quiet.

But the case is much altered since religion, by the assistance of revived learning, hath been restored to its ancient purity. The original terms of the gospel covenant between God and man are seen to be immoveable: That *habitual crimes* can be no otherwise atoned for but by *sincere repentance*; And that the very essence of *repentance* consists in forsaking vice, and returning to the actual practice of virtue.

However, admitting so rare a phenomenon as an unbeliever of real learning and reasonable morals; it would be absurd to ascribe this to his superior knowledge, when so natural an account may be given of this traverse, from his learned passions and infirmities. A *progress in arts* is far from working that change in the heart and affections which a *progress in the practice of religion* is wont to do. The higher you advance in FAITH, the easier you subdue, and the more skilfully you balance your appetites and affections: but too often, the further you advance in SCIENCE, the more you inflame those appetites and render them intractable. PRIDE and VANITY grow spontaneously out of the consciousness, whether real or imaginary, of superior knowledge. As these passions render us impatient of instruction, and scarcely submitting to be *self-taught*, so they are
most

most gratified when we quit the opinions of the croud. "If all my learning (says such a one to himself) only leads me to think with the *many*, and to have my science confounded in the mass of popular opinions, how shall I be distinguished with advantage from the ignorant and illiterate? To give such people a due esteem for my importance, they should see that learning leads men to conclusions, very distant from common sentiments. These visions, light and fantastic as they are, have, I am afraid, led many scholars to affect a singularity in thinking, which their better judgments, if not their very hearts, condemned.

This infirmity of learned heads did not escape the noble writer, whose maxim is now under consideration; when, speaking of what he calls *the resurrection of letters*, he said, "In the darkness of ignorance, superstition prevailed: in the light of knowledge, overweening curiosity; the offspring of SELF-CONCEIT; as self-conceit is of PRIDE *." And in another place, "As men advance in knowledge, their *self-conceit* is apt to increase †."

But if simple vanity be thus strong, how powerful will it prove when joined to warm resentments for neglected merit or injurious suspicions? I wish I could not say, there have been

* Vol. iv. p. 170.

† Vol. iv. p. 171.

been some, even of those consecrated to the service of religion, who have suffered those passions and resentments to carry them into the quarters of the enemy.

But as to the learned of that time, many circumstances concurred to indispose them towards the religion of their country. They went to the cultivation of the *new learning*, as it was then called, with a sort of enthusiasm. They were promised wonderful things from it. And nothing could more flatter their passions than to fancy they had discovered by it, that the religion, under which sense and conscience had lain so long oppressed, was false; a prejudice they would be very ready to indulge out of revenge to the *Monks*, who employed all their authority to discredit and discountenance the *new learning*, and all the favourers of it.

Again, there are some sciences little conversant in that kind of proof by which the truths of religion are supported; such as the simple and mixed mathematics, which labour only in strict demonstration. What wonder then, that the simple demonstrator*, unused to calculate the numerous combinations that constitute the
various

“ Les Geomètres mêmes (says a very able judge of these matters) qui devoient mieux connoître les avantages de l'analyse, que les autres Philosophes, donnent souvent la preference à la synthese. Aussi, quand ils sortent de leurs calculs pour entrer dans les recherches d'une nature différente,

various degrees of moral probability, should, when the evidence for religion came before him, appear little fitted, and less disposed to estimate its force ?

To the *incapacity*, which an addition to certain sciences induceth, may be added the *prejudices* which certain circumstances in the state of the two religious parties, that divide the western world, were apt to occasion. In the CHURCH OF ROME, the gross corruptions ; and amongst PROTESTANTS, their endless divisions into sects and factions. The *corruptions* were apt to make doubting men suspect *revelation* to be only a knavish fable ; the *divisions*, that it was only an enthusiastic dream.

Hitherto it appears that it is not learning, but the infirmities of those who profess learning, which produce that infidelity whose origin is the subject of our inquiry.

But certainly, its largest source is *pretended learning* and *superficial knowledge*, the very defect and want of that, to which his lordship ascribes the present propensity to unbelief. In
a state

rente, on ne leur trouve plus la même clarté, la même précision, ni la même *étendue d'esprit*. Nous avons quatre métaphysiciens célèbres, DESCARTES, MALLEBRANCHE, LEIBNITZ, et LOCKE. Le dernier est le seul qui ne fut pas Géomètre, et de combien n'est il pas supérieur aux trois autres ?" *Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines*, 2de partie. p. 289, 290.

a state of *simple ignorance* men hardly get so far as into the confines of doubt : which was their case before the *resurrection of letters* : Superficial knowledge soon brings them thither, and supplies them with many shallow objections against religion : and this has been the state of things ever since. And the vanity that accompanies learned pursuits being stronger and more unchecked in the entrance to science than in the more advanced stages of it, as having but little of that *conscious ignorance* to counterbalance it, which increases in proportion to our progress, the doubts and objections of the half learned will soon terminate in settled infidelity. Hence it is we find the leaders and professors of free-thinking to have been generally of this class of men. And hence it is, that there are now much fewer unbelievers amongst eminent men in the learned professions than at the revival of letters. For as science has kept advancing, and the true theory of nature opened, men's hard thoughts of revelation have gradually lessened and subsided. The philosophy of *Aristotle*, when the schools first got to its source in the sixteenth century, inclined the Italian literati to *Atheism* : and the new inventions of *Descartes* in the seventeenth disposed the French to *naturalism*. They have both now given place to the true theory of nature. And Newton, as well by his doctrine

as example, has taught the philosophic world to believe and tremble. Nor is the present overflow of infidelity any objection to the truth of this observation. For, as to the great body of unbelievers, it is neither deep, nor yet superficial learning that gives the bias. This, indeed, may form the *leaders* : but it is FASHION only (as in every other folly) that perverts the *followers*.

For just as in the times of IGNORANT DEVOTION, *believing* was the mode ; so in these our days of LEARNED INDIFFERENCE it is *free-thinking*. It is not much nor little learning, it is not knowledge, nor yet ignorance, which influences the body of mankind in their opinions, any more than in their dress ; it is CREDITABLE IMITATION, the thing we call FASHION.

In a word, if we consider LEARNING in the sense of a *discipline for the improvement of the understanding*, it has at all times been of infinite advantage to REVELATION. Yet it must not be denied, that it must sometimes be so circumstanced as to produce much mischief. I have shewn that both antient and modern learning have contributed to the propagation and establishment of the christian religion : yet it is but too true that the one, in *the genius of its doctrines*, and the other in the *mode of its propagation*,

gation, have, with great good, accidentally occasioned variety of evil.

The *metaphysical principles* of antient philosophy were destructive of the great doctrines of our faith *; which made *St. Paul* caution the Churches, lest any should *spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men.*

The *mode of propagation* has done all the mischief in these latter times. The use of letters among the antients, even in the flourishing state of them, was confined to the FEW; who, by their stations in life, were enabled to make a real and a reasonable improvement. But since the invention of printing, the *instruments of knowledge* has grown so common as to get into the hands of the PEOPLE: where, instead of improving the understandings, they have had no other effect than to inflame the passions, of which, RELIGION, SOCIETY, and even LETTERS themselves, now feel the miserable effects.

On the whole then we see, how ridiculous as well as malicious the noble person's observation is, "That revelation owes its credit to ignorance; and loses ground as learning and science advance against it." For what there is of fact, on which he supports his observation,
is

* *Divine Legation*, Book III. *sect.* 4.

is only this, that *there is a greater number of unbelievers amongst the professors of christianity since the revival of letters than before.* But if this inference be just, it would hold as well against the *being of a God*, as against the *truth of revelation*; for, to one atheist in the monkish times, there were a hundred at the revival of learning. One degree of science is fitted to discover error; and another, to find out the truth. In the interim, the infirmity of our nature betrays us, and in running from an absurdity we rarely stop till we be got intangled in its opposite.

But the inference is, in every view, so groundless, that *christianity* (as we have shewn) made its first way against the highest powers and prejudices, in the very centre of the most flourishing age of knowledge.

At the last revival of letters it received the strongest aid from human science; and the sincerest homage from the most illustrious names that ever adorned or cultivated letters.

The only enemies it found amongst the learned were either such as were immoral in their lives; or were tied down by a false philosophy to inveterate prejudices; or were carried away by vanity; or were incompetent judges by their unacquaintance with the nature of the proofs; or lastly such who *pretended only to a knowledge they indeed had not.*

And as to the gross body of licentious men, learning had no concern in the affair; these were entirely under the sway and influence of FASHION.

From all this we conclude, that let INFIDELITY be risen to what height it will, it is not yet of that kind which brings any real discredit to REVELATION.

The rejectors of it, therefore, would do well to consider the grounds on which they stand; and what account they will be able to give the great Judge of all the earth at his second coming for having contributed to that horrid defection which he hath foretold will be then found amongst men.

J O R T I N ' s
FIRST CHARGE.



J O R T I N's FIRST CHARGE.

M A Y 3, 1765.

CHRISTIANITY the PRESERVER and
SUPPORTER of LITERATURE.

Ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου.

My Reverend Brethren,

IT is obvious to observe how much religion suffers from the fanatical spirit which prevails amongst the lower sort, and from the open profaneness and infidelity of persons whose education, station, and circumstances ought to have taught them better things, and to have made them grateful to God, and useful to the public.

As to the former of these evils, fanaticism, that it produces many bad effects, is manifest; but where it is not joined with the spirit of impudence and detraction, and with a contempt

of morality, one would willingly consider it and treat it rather as a disease than as a fault, and by no means so pernicious as infidelity, that pestilence which walketh in this nation openly and at noon-day.

It is therefore our office and duty to vindicate the truth, reasonableness, and excellence of our religion against the cavils of the Deist, and the misrepresentations of the enthusiast. But setting enthusiasm aside, I shall confine this discourse to the defence of our cause against infidelity.

There is no nation wherein so many and so bold and undisguised and insolent attacks upon christianity have appeared in the present and in the last century, as in this country of ours.

But it cannot hence be fairly inferred, that we abound more in infidels than other christian nations. It may be presumed that there are more in France and Italy than here. But in popish countries they are obliged to be upon the reserve, as to the publication of books: there is no insulting the established religion in that gross manner; and the authority of the magistrate, enforced by pains and penalties, lays some restraint upon profane persons in those regions; whilst among us men may *curse God and prosper*. So that the laboured works
of

of our infidels are the fruits of that liberty of the press which here prevails in matters relating to religion. To put rigid restraints upon it, seems to be no good remedy. In this world such is the course of things, that evil often ariseth out of good, and good out of evil. The freedom of writing, though it will unavoidably degenerate into licentiousness, hath produced many useful effects. Truth is not afraid of being examined or opposed; the books of Deists and Atheists have perverted few, except those who were already more than half-spoilt without their assistance; and they have occasioned many excellent treatises in behalf of religion, and have also taught the defenders of the gospel to reject the rubbish which prejudice, ignorance, and bigotry had superadded to the christian religion, and whatsoever was not essential to it, to reduce it as nearly as possible to its primitive simplicity, to give up such interpretations of it as are indefensible, and to pay no blind veneration fathers and councils, and systems of theology.

*Jam nihil, O superi querimur; scelera ipsa
nefasque*

Hac mercede placent.

Amongst the objections which profane men have raised against the gospel, are these, that it hath done much harm in the world, and

that it hath done little good to compensate that evil.

In attempting to shew that christianity hath been the cause of much evil, they have a large field to expatiate in, a copious subject for declamation. They observe, that as soon as the Church had peace without doors, she had war within, and began to oppress her own children for real or pretended heresies; that as soon as the Jews and Pagans could no longer persecute her, she began in her turn to persecute them; that from the fourth century, when she learned to shed blood, and to put the Priscillianists to death for erroneous opinions, all sorts of evils prevailed and encreased, as uncharitable contentions, fines, banishments, imprisonments, superstition, monkery, fanaticism, pious frauds, lying miracles, idolatrous practices, ecclesiastical usurpation and tyranny, inquisitions, assassinations, rebellious, perjuries, breach of public faith, croisades, impious wars waged upon pious pretences, and so forth.

A short answer will suffice for this accusation. We deny the charge. The facts objected, though exaggerated by our enemies, have in them for the most part more truth than we could wish. But what hath the gospel to do with them? The gospel teacheth and encourageth no such practices, but absolutely condemns

demns them ; the gospel, as Ammianus Marcellinus, though a Pagan, honestly says of it, *Nihil nisi justum suadet et lene*. The Christians who signalized themselves by their immoral deeds, particularly by cruel acts of persecution, were men whose behaviour was contrary to the religion which they professed, and many of them were nominal Christians and real Atheists ; and the Christians who fell into gross superstition and fanaticism were men who understood not the nature of true religion, and many of whom were more than half-mad.

But it hath been an old device with infidels, to confound religion with superstition. Lucretius began the attack, and always calls superstition by the name of religion.

Religio peperit scelerosa atque impia facta.

In this he hath been imitated by all his successors, down to these days ; and our Hobbes hath assured us that the only difference between religion and superstition is this, that religion is a superstition in fashion, and superstition is a religion out of fashion. Thus he with some wit, much malice, and no truth.

The other objection which I intend to consider more fully is, that christianity hath done little good in the world. If christianity, say they, had been in reality what its votaries pretend, a divine revelation, established and supported by a series of præternatural operations,
the

the same Providence which introduced it with such a vast *apparatus*, such a profusion of signs and wonders, would certainly have so ordered the course of things, that the salutary effects of it should have been proportionable to the means. But the contrary is evident, and the follies and vices of Christians, especially from the time that their religion was received by the Emperors, and by law established, shew that the whole system was a mere human contrivance, and that God had no share in it.

Here we may just observe, by the way, that the corruptions of the Christian world were foreseen and foretold by Christ and his Apostles, which shews at least thus much, that they were not mistaken, and did not expect that more benefit should arise from the gospel than hath really been produced.

Nor indeed could it have had a greater influence upon the minds and manners of men, without such a method of divine government as would leave no liberty, no deliberating, chusing, and preferring; and instead of exalting human nature, would depress it beneath its present condition.

But to come directly to the point in hand, whosoever shall carefully and candidly consider the case, will be obliged to allow that the gospel, notwithstanding all the defects of
Christians,

Christians, hath produced much good in the world.

This subject I formerly endeavoured to clear up in some discourses on the Christian religion, in which I gave many instances to shew that Christianity hath civilized several barbarous nations, abolished several cruel customs, suppressed polygamy and licentious divorces, and in a great measure slavery, mended the civil laws, established schools and academies, improved the moral and religious notions even of those who did not receive it, as of the ancient Pagans, and of the Jews, and of the Mahometans.

Tantum Relligio potuit suadere bonorum.

But there is one considerable benefit arising from it, which at that time I overlooked ; and which I think deserves to be examined, and it is this, that all the useful learning which is now to be found in the world is in a great measure owing to the Gospel. If this can be made out, it should move every person who hath any love and esteem for literature, and who is, or pretends to be, skilled in it, to think and speak decently and respectfully, at least, of that religion to which he is indebted for it.

I cannot recollect to have seen this point directly discussed by any ancient or modern writer. Indeed it came lately into my mind, whilst

whilst I was considering how I should address myself on this occasion to you, my learned brethren, and whilst I was seeking out some subject which might recommend itself to your favourable attention. I will therefore proceed in this inquiry, trusting in your candour, and persuaded that you will excuse defects in the performance, for the sake of the design.

The keys of learning are the learned languages, and a grammatical and critical skill in them.

The reverence which the Jews had for their sacred books preserved those most ancient of all records, and along with them the knowledge of the Hebrew language. But the Christians, who had the same veneration for the Old Testament, have contributed more than the Jews themselves to secure and to explain those books, as they had indeed more advantages and greater helps. The Christians in ancient times collected and preserved the Greek versions of those Scriptures, particularly that of the Septuagint, and translated the originals into Latin. They preserved copies of the works of Josephus, which were little esteemed by the Jews, who substituted in his place a ridiculous blockhead, called Josephus Ben Gorion, but which help to confirm and explain the sacred books, and cast a light upon the Jewish history. To Christians were due the old Hexapala:
and

and in the later times Christians have published the Polyglotts, and the Samaritan Pentateuch; and the Christian criticks and commentators, such as Capellus, Bochart, Grotius, Le Clerc, Vitringa, and many others have beyond measure surpassed the Jewish Doctors in illustrating and defending the holy Scriptures.

It was the study of the Scriptures which excited Christians from early times to the study of Chronology, sacred and secular; and here much knowledge of history, and some skill in Astronomy were needful.

The New Testament, being written in Greek, caused Christians to apply themselves also to the study of that most copious and beautiful language.

Christianity at first, and for a considerable time, was violently opposed and assaulted by the Jews and Gentiles, and grievous were the sufferings of the primitive Christians. But this evil was compensated by many advantages: it was opposition which excited the Christians to justify their own cause, and to confute their adversaries, the Jewish Doctors, and the learned Gentiles, to expose the absurdities of Jewish Traditions, the weakness of Paganism, and the imperfections and insufficiency of Philosophy. For this purpose Jewish and Pagan literature were necessary, and what we call Philology, or classical erudition. And thus the Christians became

became in learning superior to the Pagans; and in point of style and composition, as good writers as they, both in Latin and in Greek.

The first Fathers, till the third century, were generally Greek writers. In this third century, the Latin language was much upon the decline; but the Christians preserved it from sinking into absolute barbarism; and of the Latin Fathers in this and the following ages, it may be affirmed that most of them wrote as well, at least, as their Pagan contemporaries, and some of them better; for this is a fair way of trying their abilities, and it is not reasonable to expect of them that they should equal Cæsar or Livy, Sallust or Cicero.

In the second and third century then, we have Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Cyprian, Arnobius, and Novatian, who may be opposed to the Latin Pagans of or after those times, and are not inferior to them, not to Apuleius, Ammianus Marcellinus, Symmachus, the writers of the *Historia Augusta*, &c.

As to Minucius Felix, there is some affectation, and something of the African diction in his style; but there is something very lively, agreeable, and elegant in it, wherein he surpasseth any of the Pagans above-mentioned.

In the fourth and fifth centuries, we have Lactantius, a pure and elegant writer, who may justly be called *The Christian Cicero*;

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we have the poets Prudentius, and Aufonius, (if the latter may pass for more than a nominal Christian) and Ambrose, and Augustin, and the ingenious and learned Jerom, and Vincen-tius Lirinensis, and Eucherius, and Salvian, and Sidonius, and Sulpitius Severus, who are all good, or not bad writers, and the last of whom, Sulpitius Severus, hath a correctness and purity of style far beyond the age in which he lived.

About the middle of the sixth century we may date the extinction of Paganism in the Christian world, that is, of the Roman and Greek Idolatry. In this age lived that excellent writer Boethius, who might perhaps deserve a place even amongst Classic authors.

The Greek language was more durable, and suffered less corruption than the Latin, and the Greeks had pretty good writers down to the fifteenth century. Their empire from its decline to its dissolution ceased not to produce persons who applied themselves to the study of eloquence; of history, of philosophy, and of Theology. Among the Fathers are Justin Martyr, Clemens of Alexandria, Basil, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen, the eloquent Chrysostom, Theodoret, Synesius, and others, whose style is by no means contemptible. To these must be added the most laborious and
learned

learned Origen, and Eusebius the father of ecclesiastical history.

After the sixth century, ignorance, together with superstition and ecclesiastical tyranny, daily got ground till the reformation. But however, even in these darker ages, there were not only pious and charitable, but studious and learned men to be found, men indeed of no inconsiderable erudition, considering the disadvantages under which they laboured; for these times were not altogether so deplorable as we usually imagine, and were neither quite deprived of knowledge or of virtue.

Such were Alcuin, an English Abbot, in the eighth century, Photius in the ninth, Bruno in the tenth, Lambertus in the eleventh, and many learned Greeks and Latins in the twelfth, and the following ages, as Eustathius of Thessalonica, Cinnamus, Gylcas, Zonaras, Nicephorus Briennius, Anna Comnena, Anchialus, the elegant writer of the life of the emperor Henry the fourth, William of Malmesbury, Abelard remarkable for his singular abilities and unhappy fate, Saxo Grammaticus, Brunetto Latini, Roger Bacon, our unfortunate and persecuted countryman, and as great a genius perhaps as any age ever produced, Richard of Bury, Bishop of Durham, and Petrarch, to whom many more might be added. Nor were there wanting in those times Patrons of literature

ture and friends to merit, such as Alphonfus king of Spain, and Pope Nicholas the fifth in the fifteenth century. No Protestant scholar will refuse to pay his respects to the memory of this excellent prelate. No man perhaps ever had so many books inscribed and dedicated to him. He enriched the Vatican library with several volumes fetched from the remotest regions; he made large presents to the learned Philelphus, and promised him much greater rewards, if he would come to Rome, and translate Greek Classics into Latin. But the death of this worthy pontiff put an end to the project.

Photius, whom I mentioned, may also deserve particular notice. Never was there any Bishop more persecuted by the Popes than this illustrious Patriarch, who had more learning and greater abilities than almost all the Popes put together. He had the honour to be anathematized by seven of them during his life, and by four after his death. There is at Cambridge an old manuscript of his Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles, which are not published. But Oecumenius hath inserted extracts from them in his work, which is an useful collection from older writers; and we cannot at present want Greek Commentaries * on the Scriptures, being

* *Thick as autumnal leaves, that strow the brooks
In Vallembrofa.*
and as soon withered.

MILTON.

being so plentifully supplied with English ones.

There were always, even in the dark ages, schools in the cathedrals and the monasteries, by which means some literature was kept up, in different nations, and at different times, first, at Rome, then here in England, then in France, and then in Germany; and this way of education and instruction, continued till the foundation of Universities, so called, because in them universal erudition, and all the liberal arts were professed and taught.

It must be owned, that at the revival of letters in the western world, polite and classical literature, and the philosophy of Plato and of Aristotle were cultivated by ingenious and learned men, some of whom are much suspected to have had little or no religion. But these men never attacked Christianity directly; they outwardly conformed to it, as to the established religion; and learning soon got into better hands, and the improvement of it was carried on by real Christians, such as Erasmus, Luther, Budæus, Vives, Melancthon, Camerarius, and many others.

Monkery, which like a foul torrent, from the fourth century, overflowed the Christian world, produced many sad effects: but Providence here also brought good out of evil. The monks were occupied in the transcribing
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of books; and though they preserved many Homilies and Theological tracts of the later Fathers, which we could well have spared, and neglected some valuable authors whose loss we deplore, yet they transmitted to us those Latin and Greek classics which we now possess, and which would have perished, had it not been for their labours, and for the libraries contained in their monasteries. To them we owe copies of the Roman law, of the Theodosian and Justinian Codes; and the Roman laws being adopted, more or less, in Christian nations, and the study of them being honourable and profitable, conduced greatly to the preservation of literature in general, and of the Latin language in particular.

In the ninth century, the Saracens exerted themselves remarkably in the studious way, and contributed much to the restoration of letters in Europe. For this, the Deists will say, no thanks are due to Christianity, since these Saracens were mahometans. But I say that whatever good is to be found in the mahometan religion, and some good doctrines and precepts there undeniably are in it, is in no small measure owing to christianity. For mahometism is a borrowed system, made up for the most part of Judaism and Christianity; and if it be considered in the most favourable view, might possibly be accounted a sort of Christian heresy. If the Gospel had never been preached, it
may

may be questioned whether mahometism would have existed. Its author was an ignorant knave and fanatic, who had neither skill nor genius to form a religion out of his own head.

Now let us consider the subject in another way, and make the supposition that Christianity had been suppressed, at its first appearance, and that no traces of it had been left.

In such a case it is extremely probable, that the Latin and Greek tongues would have been lost in the revolutions of empire, and the interruptions of Barbarians in the East and in the West; for the old inhabitants would have had no conscientious and religious motives to keep up their languages. And then, together with the Latin and Greek tongues, the knowledge of antiquities, and the ancient writers would have been destroyed. You may see something of this kind in the present state of Afric, where the Latin tongue is absolutely unknown, although in the fifth century it was spoken there as in Italy. Idolatry and superstition, in some shape or other, would have been the religion of the populace, and the upper sort would have been for the most part Sceptics or Atheists, with a mixture of some Deists. The Jewish religion would possibly have subsisted, confined to its own people, whilst many of them would probably have been apostates. It is not so formed as to become the national religion of any other people; and indeed the evidences for it would have been weaker

weaker than they now are, wanting the assistance of Christianity, which is perhaps its principal support. There would then have been no public schools*, no Cathedrals, no Universities for the promoting of erudition.

If the Scriptures have contributed so much to the preservation and propagation of the learned languages, the Papists may plead that the Latin Liturgy used by them hath in some degree the same good tendency. This we may grant; but they ought also to acknowledge that such a benefit is by no means sufficient to compensate the absurdity and iniquity of confining the publick service to a tongue not understood by the vulgar.

Whilst dead languages ought by all means to be studied, living ones ought by no means to be neglected; and our Bible and Common-Prayer-Book, besides their religious use, have contributed much to preserve and fix the English language.

But give me leave to observe that the † Act
of

* In the first Protestant Schools and Universities of Germany, most of the students were very poor. They supported themselves by begging, and singing Psalms from door to door; they studied by moonlight, for want of candles; they were pinched with cold and hunger: yet the earnest desire of erudition surmounted all these difficulties, and they became private tutors, schoolmasters, preachers and professors.

† In the first Act confirming the Liturgy, in 1548, the Universities are permitted to use it in Latin or in Greek, excepting the Office for the Communion. *Burnet.*

of uniformity hath exprefsly made an exception for public Schools, and for Colleges, and permitted them the free ufe of the Latin Liturgy, in their own Chapels; upon the fuppofition that they would be glad to accept it.

To the Gospel then, and to thofe who embrace it, are due our grateful acknowledgments for the learning that is at prefent in the world. The Infidels educated in Chriftian countries owe what learning they have to Chriftianity, and act the part of thofe brutes, which when they have fucked the dam, turn about and * ftrike her.

But doubtlefs they will put in their claim for a fhare in the merit of civilizing, reforming, and inftructing the public. Let us look a little at home, and fee how the cafe ftands amongft us.

Great Britain in this and the laft century produced Deiftical or Atheiftical writers, as Herbert, Hobbes, Toland, Shaftsbury, Collins, Mandeville, Woolfton, Tindall, Morgan, Chub, Bolingbroke, Hume, and fome who are anonymous.

I fhall not enter into a detail of the various things which are juftly cenfurable in thefe authors; but keeping the prefent fubject in view, I obferve that fome of them have been ignorant and illiterate, moft of them a fort of half-

* ἀπολακτίζειν, as Plato faid to his difciple *Aristotle*.

half-scholars, and retailers of second-hand wares, none of them eminently learned, or contributors to the advancement of erudition and knowledge in any material article.

To whom are we indebted for the knowledge of antiquities, sacred and secular, for every thing that is called *Philology*, or the *Literæ Humaniores*? To Christians. To whom for grammars and dictionaries of the learned languages? To Christians. To whom for chronology, and the continuation of history through many centuries? To Christians. To whom for rational systems of morality and of Natural Religion? To Christians. To whom for improvements in Natural Philosophy, and for the application of these discoveries to religious purposes? To Christians. To whom for Metaphysical researches carried as far as the subject will permit? To Christians. To whom for the moral rules to be observed by nations in war and peace? To Christians. To whom for *Jurisprudence*, and for political knowledge, and for settling the rights of subjects, both civil and religious, upon a proper foundation? To Christians. Not to the Atheists or Deists, some of whom, as Hobbes in particular, have been known advocates for *

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tyranny.

* Bolingbroke, whilst he was a Minister of State, persecuted the Dissenters, *for the good of the Church*; and afterwards wrote books *for the good of Religion*. So he often assures

tyranny. To whom for the great work of the Reformation? To Christians. Let me add; and very often to Christian Divines.

The Reformation, besides many blessings, spiritual and temporal, which we reap from it, hath been of service even to the Papists, though they have not the gratitude to own it. Luther's attack obliged the Court of Rome, to seek out methods of defence. The Croisades could no longer be carried on for the general extirpation of Heretics; the old system of Papal omnipotence began to grow rotten, and to fall to pieces, to the comfort and relief of the Papists themselves. Other devices were necessary to supply these losses, such as new-modelled *Inquisitions*, and to *Indices Expurgatorii*. But to these scandalous methods one was added, which should extort commendation even from an adversary; Their clergy were earnestly exhorted to pursue learned studies, and considerable rewards were conferred on those who signalized themselves that way. The Romish Ecclesiastics would have been sunk in sloth and ignorance, if the Protestants had not roused them from their lethargy, and compelled them to write and read in behalf of a declining cause.

The

assures us; and so the hangman said to a young Prince, (Don Carlos) when he was going to strangle him, *Pray, my Lord, be quiet; it is all for your good.* The comparison suits, if the story be true.

The author of the life of Cardinal Pole hath lately undertaken to recommend to us the very scum and dregs of Popery, and to vilify and calumniate the Reformation and the reformers, in a bigoted, disingenuous, and superficial performance. Yet even this poor attempt hath its use. It hath occasioned some good remarks already, and will receive farther correction from able hands. It may serve also to inform us of the true and unalterable spirit of Popery, and to shew us what usage * we have to expect, if these Ecclesiastics could once more rule over us. It is fit that we should be sometimes put in mind of this; for we have been strangely apt to forget it, and to contradict a Proverb of our own, which says that *A burnt child dreads the fire.*

As Religion hath been the chief preserver of erudition, so erudition hath not been ungrateful to her patroness, but hath contributed largely to the support of Religion. The useful expositions of the Scriptures, the sober

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and

* Mary Queen of Scots, wrote a letter to the Fathers assembled at Trent, in which she declared that she submitted herself to that Council, and promised, as soon as she should be in possession of the crown of England that of right belonged to her, to reduce the two kingdoms to the obedience of the holy See. This was in May 1563. *Du Pin*, T. xv. p. 291.

Hence it may be judged in what manner she would have ruled over us, if she had succeeded in her projects.

and sensible defences of Revelation, the faithful representation of pure and undefiled Christianity, these have been the works of learned, judicious, and industrious men. The corruptions of the Gospel, the perverse interpretations and absurd senses put upon the word of God, both in matters of faith and of practice, these have been the inventions of men who had a small share of learning, and a large share of knavery, or of fanaticism, or of both blended together.

Fanatics are no friends to reason and learning; and not without some kind of reason; first, because they have usually a slender provision of either; secondly, because a man hath no occasion to spend his time and his pains in the studious way, who hath an inward illumination to guide him to truth, and to make such labour unnecessary.

I conclude, that the learning which now exists, is, if not solely, yet principally to be ascribed to Christianity; and that its Divine author said most justly of himself, in this sense also,

I am the light of the world.

AN
ADDRESS
TO THE
DEISTS;

BEING AN EXTRACT FROM
AN APOLOGY FOR CHRISTIANITY.

By the RIGHT REVEREND
R. LORD BISHOP OF LANDAFF.



A N
A D D R E S S
T O T H E
D E I S T S.

GENTLEMEN,

SUPPOSE the mighty work accomplished, the cross trampled upon, Christianity every where proscribed, and the religion of nature once more become the religion of Europe; what advantage will you have derived to your country, or to yourselves, from the exchange? I know your answer—you will have freed the world from the hypocrisy of Priests, and the tyranny of superstition.—No; you forget that Lycurgus, and Numa, and Odin and Mango Copac, and all the great legislators of ancient or modern story, have been of opinion, that the affairs of civil society could not well be

conducted without some religion; you must of necessity introduce a priesthood, with, probably, as much hypocrisy; a religion, with assuredly, more superstition, than that which you now reprobate with such indecent and ill-grounded contempt. But I will tell you, from what you will have freed the world; you will have freed it from its abhorrence of vice, and from every powerful incentive to virtue; you will, with the religion, have brought back the depraved morality, of Paganism; you will have robbed mankind of their firm assurance of another life; and thereby you will have despoiled them of their patience, of their humility, of their charity, of their chastity, of all those mild and silent virtues, which (however despicable they may appear in your eyes) are the only ones, which meliorate and sublime our nature; which Paganism never knew, which spring from Christianity alone, which do or might constitute our comfort in this life, and without the possession of which, another life, if after all there should happen to be one, must (unless a miracle be exerted in the alteration of our disposition) be more vicious and more miserable than this is.

Perhaps you will contend, that the universal light of reason, that the truth and fitness of things, are of themselves, sufficient to exalt the nature, and regulate the manners of mankind

kind. Shall we never have done with this groundless commendation of natural law? Look into the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and you will see the extent of its influence over the Gentiles of those days; if you dislike Paul's authority, and the manners of antiquity, look into the more admired accounts of modern voyagers; and examine its influence over the Pagans of our times, over the sensual inhabitants of Otaheite, over the Canibals of New Zealand, or the remorseless Savages of America. But these men are barbarians.—Your law of nature notwithstanding, extends even to them:—but they have misused their reason; they have then the more need of, and would be more thankful for that revelation, which you, with an ignorant and fastidious self-sufficiency deem useless.—But, they might of themselves, if they thought fit, become wise and virtuous,—I answer with Cicero, *ut nihil interest, utrum nemo valeat, an nemo valere possit; sic non intelligo quid interest, utrum nemo sit sapiens, an nemo esse possit.*

These however, you will think, are extraordinary instances; and that we ought not from these, to take our measure of the excellency of the law of nature; but rather from the civilized states of China and Japan, or from the nations which flourished in learning and in arts, before Christianity was heard of

in the world. You mean to say, that by the law of nature, which you are desirous of substituting in the room of the Gospel, you do not understand those rules of conduct, which an individual, abstracted from the community, and deprived of the institution of mankind, could excogitate for himself; but such a system of precepts, as the most enlightened men of the most enlightened ages, have recommended to our observance. Where do you find this system? We cannot meet with it in the works of Stobæus, or the Scythian Anacharsis, nor in those of Plato or of Cicero, nor in those of the Emperor Antoninus, or the slave Epictetus; for we are persuaded, that the most animated considerations of the *ωρεπρον*, and the *honestum*, of the beauty of virtue, and the fitness of things, are not able to furnish, even a Brutus himself, with permanent principles of action; much less are they able, to purify the polluted recesses of a vitiated heart, to curb the irregularity of appetite, or restrain the impetuosity of passion in common men. If you order us to examine the works of Grotius, or Puffendorf, of Burlamaqui, or Hutcheson, for what you understand by the law of nature; we apprehend that you are in a great error, in taking your notions of natural law as discovered by natural reason, from the elegant systems of it, which have been drawn up by Christian Philosophers; since they have all laid their foundations, either tacitly or expressly, upon a principal

principle derived from revelation, a thorough knowledge of the being and attributes of God: and even those amongst yourselves, who, rejecting Christianity still continue Theists, are indebted to Revelation (whether you are either aware of, or disposed to acknowledge the debt or not) for those sublime speculations concerning the Deity, which you have fondly attributed to the excellency of your own unassisted reason. If you would know the real genius of natural law, and how far it can proceed in the investigation or enforcement of moral duties; you must consult the manners and the writings of those, who have never heard of either the Jewish or the Christian dispensation, or of those other manifestations of himself, which God vouchsafed to Adam and to the Patriarchs, before and after the flood. It would be difficult perhaps any where, to find a people entirely destitute of traditionary notices concerning a Deity, and of traditionary fears or expectations of another life; and the morals of mankind may have, perhaps, been no where quite so abandoned, as they would have been, had they been left wholly to themselves in these points; however, it is a truth, which cannot be denied, how much soever it may be lamented, that though the generality of mankind have always had some faint conceptions of God, and his providence; yet they

they have been always greatly inefficacious in the production of good morality, and highly derogatory to his nature, amongst all the people of the earth, except the Jews and Christians ; and some may perhaps be desirous of excepting the Mahometans, who derive all that is good in their *Koran* from Christianity.

The laws concerning justice, and the reparation of damages, concerning the security of property, and the performance of contracts ; concerning, in short, whatever affects the well-being of civil society, have been every where understood with sufficient precision ; and if you choose to style Justinian's code, a code of natural law, though you will err against propriety of speech, yet you are so far in the right, that natural reason discovered, and the depravity of human nature compelled human kind, to establish by proper sanctions the laws therein contained ; and you will have moreover Carneades, no mean Philosopher, on your side ; who knew of no law of nature, different from that which men had instituted for their common utility ; and which was various according to the manners of men in different climates, and changeable with a change of times in the same. And in truth, in all countries where Paganism has been the established religion,

religion, though a philosopher may now and then have stepped beyond the paltry prescript of civil jurisprudence, in his pursuit of virtue, yet the bulk of mankind have ever been contented with that scanty pittance of morality, which enabled them to escape the lash of civil punishment : I call it a scanty pittance ; because a man may be intemperate, iniquitous, impious, a thousand ways a profligate and a villain, and yet elude the cognizance, and avoid the punishment of civil laws.

I am sensible, you will be ready to say, what is all this to the purpose ? though the bulk of mankind may never be able to investigate the laws of natural religion, nor disposed to reverence their sanctions when investigated by others, nor solicitous about any other standard of moral rectitude, than civil legislation ; yet the inconveniences which may attend the extirpation of Christianity, can be no proof of its truth. I have not produced them, as a proof of its truth ; but they are a strong and conclusive proof, if not of its truth, at least of its utility ; and the consideration of its utility, may be a motive to yourselves for examining, whether it may not chance to be true ; and it ought to be a reason with every good citizen, and with every man of sound judgment, to keep his opinions to himself, if from any particular circumstances in his studies or in his education,

education, he should have the misfortune to think that it is not true. If you can discover to the rising generation, a better religion than the Christian, one that will more effectually animate their hopes, and subdue their passions, make them better men or better members of society, we importune you to publish it for their advantage; but till you can do that, we beg of you, not to give the reins to their passions, by instilling into their unsuspicious minds your pernicious prejudices: even now, men scruple not, by their lawless lust, to ruin the repose of private families, and to fix a stain of infamy upon the noblest: even now, they hesitate not, in lifting up a murderous arm against the life of their friend, or against their own, as often as the fever of intemperance, stimulates their resentment; or the satiety of an useless life excites their despondency: even now, whilst we are persuaded of a resurrection from the dead, and of a *judgment to come*, we find it difficult enough to resist the solicitations of sense, and to escape unspotted from the licentious manners of the world: But what will become of our virtue, what of the consequent peace and happiness of society, if you persuade us, that there are no such things? in two words, you may ruin yourselves by your attempt, and you will certainly ruin your country by your success.

But

But the consideration of the inutility of your design, is not the only one, which should induce you to abandon it ; the argument *a tuto* ought to be warily managed, or it may tend to the silencing our opposition to any system of superstition, which has had the good fortune to be sanctified by publick authority ; it is, indeed, liable to no objection in the present case ; we do not, however, wholly rely upon its cogency. It is not contended, that Christianity, is to be received ; merely because it is useful ; but because it is true. This you deny, and think your objections well grounded ; we conceive them originating in your vanity, your immorality, or your misapprehension. There are many worthless doctrines, many superstitious observances, which the fraud or folly of mankind have every where annexed to Christianity, (especially in the church of Rome) as essential parts of it ; if you take these sorry appendages to christianity, for christianity itself as preached by Christ, and by the Apostles, if you confound the Roman, with the Christian religion, you quite misapprehend its nature ; and are in a state similar to that of men, mentioned by Plutarch in his treatise of superstition ; who flying from superstition, leapt over religion, and sunk into downright Atheism *.

Christianity

* Le Papisme, says Helvetius in a Posthumous Work, n'est aux yeux d'un homme sensé qu'une pure idolatrie—

Christianity is not a religion very palatable to a voluptuous age ; it will not conform its precepts to the standard of fashion ; it will not lessen the deformity of vice by lenient appellations ; but calls keeping, whoredom ; intrigue, adultery, and duelling, murder ; it will not pander the lust, it will not license the intemperance of mankind ; it is a troublesome monitor to a man of pleasure ; and your way of life may have made you quarrel with your religion. As to your vanity, as a cause of your infidelity, suffer me to produce the sentiments of M. Bayle upon that head ; if the description does not suit your character, you will not be offended at it ; and if you are offended with its freedom, it will do you good.

“ This inclines me to believe, that Libertines,
 “ like Des-Barreaux, are not greatly persuaded
 “ of the truth of what they say. They have
 “ made no deep examination ; they have learn-
 “ ed some few objections, which they are pet-
 “ petually making a noise with ; they speak
 “ from

nous sommes étonnés de l'absurdité de la religion païenne. Celle de la religion Papiste étonnera bien d'avantage un jour la postérité.—*Popery in the eyes of a man of sense is downright Idolatry. We are astonished at the absurdity of Paganism. Posterity will one day be much more astonished at the absurdity of Popery.* We trust, that the day is not at a great distance, and Deism will then be buried in the ruins of the church of Rome ; for the taking the superstition, the avarice, the ambition, the intolerance of Anti-christianism for Christianity, has been the great error, upon which infidelity has built its system, both at home and abroad.

“ from a principle of ostentation, and give
 “ themselves the lie in the time of danger.
 “ Vanity has a greater share in their disputes,
 “ than conscience ; they imagine that the singularity and boldness of the opinions which
 “ they maintain, will give them the reputation of men of parts :—by degrees, they get
 “ a habit of holding impious discourses ; and
 “ if their vanity be accompanied by a voluptuous life, their progress in that road is the
 “ swifter *.

The main stress of your objections, rests not upon the insufficiency of the external evidence to the truth of Christianity ; for few of you, though you may become the future ornaments of the senate, or of the bar, have ever employed an hour in its examination ; but upon the difficulty of the doctrines, contained in the New Testament : they exceed you say, your comprehension ; and you felicitate yourselves, that you are not yet arrived at the true standard of orthodox faith,—*credo quia impossibile*. You think, it would be taking a superfluous trouble, to inquire into the nature of the external proofs, by which Christianity is established ; since, in your opinion, the book itself carries with it its own refutation. A gentleman as acute, probably as any of you ; and who once believed, perhaps, as little

* Bayle, Hist. Dict. Art. Des-Barreaux.

tle as any of you, has drawn a quite different conclusion from the perusal of the new Testament ; his book (however exceptionable it may be thought in some particular parts) exhibits, not only a distinguished triumph of reason over prejudice, of Christianity over Deism ; but it exhibits, what is infinitely more rare, the character of a man, who has had courage and candour enough to acknowledge it*.

But what if there should be some incomprehensible doctrines in the Christian religion ; some circumstances, which in their causes, or their consequences, surpass the reach of human reason ; are they to be rejected upon that account ? You are, or would be thought men of reading, and knowledge, and enlarged understandings ; weigh the matter fairly ; and consider whether revealed religion be not, in this respect, just upon the same footing, as with every other object of your contemplation. Even in mathematics, the science of demonstration itself, though you get over its first principles, and learn to digest the idea of a point without parts, a line without breadth, and a surface without thickness ; yet you will find yourselves at a loss to comprehend the perpetual approximation of lines, which can never meet ; the doctrine of incommensurables and
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* See a View of the Internal Evidence, &c. by Soame Jenyns.

of an infinity of infinites, each infinitely greater, or infinitely less, not only than any finite quantity, but than each other. In physics, you cannot comprehend the primary cause of any thing ; not of the light, by which you see ; nor of the elasticity of the air, by which you hear ; nor of the fire, by which you are warmed. In physiology, you cannot tell, what first gave motion to the heart ; nor what continues it ; nor why its motion is less voluntary, than that of the lungs ; nor why you are able to move your arm, to the right or left, by a simple volition : you cannot explain the cause of animal heat ; nor comprehend the principle, by which your body was at first formed, nor by which it is sustained, nor by which it will be reduced to earth. In natural religion, you cannot comprehend the eternity or omnipresence of the Deity ; nor easily understand, how his prescience can be consistent with your freedom, or his immutability with his government of moral agents ; nor why he did not make all his creatures equally perfect ; nor why he did not create them sooner : In short, you cannot look into any branch of knowledge, but you will meet with subjects above your comprehension. The fall and the redemption of human kind, are not more incomprehensible, than the creation and conservation of the universe ; the infinite Author of the works of providence,

providence, and of nature, is equally inscrutable, equally past our finding out in them both. And it is somewhat remarkable, that the deepest inquirers into nature, have ever thought with the most reverence, and spoken with the most diffidence, concerning those things, which in revealed religion, may seem hard to be understood; they have ever avoided that self-sufficiency of knowledge, which springs from ignorance, produces indifference, and ends in infidelity. Admirable to this purpose, is the reflection of the greatest mathematician of the present age, when he is combating an opinion of Newton's, by an hypothesis of his own, still less defensible than that which he opposes: —* Tous les jours que je vois de ces esprits-forts, qui critique les verités de notre religion, et s'en moquent même avec la plus impertinente suffisance, je pense, chetifs mortels ! combien et combien des choses sur lesquels vous raisonnez si legerement, sont elles plus sublimes, et plus élevés, que celles sur lesquelles le grand Newton s'egare si grossierement †.

Plato mentions a set of men, who were very

* *As often as I see those Esprits-forts who criticise the truths of our religion, and even ridicule them with the most impertinent self-sufficiency, I think, wretched mortals ! how much and how many of the things on which you reason so lightly, are more sublime, and more elevated than those with respect to which the great Newton was so grossly mistaken.*

† Euler.

ry ignorant, and thought themselves supremely wise ; and who rejected the argument for the being of a God, derived from the harmony and order of the universe, as old and trite * ; there have been men, it seems, in all ages, who in affecting singularity, have overlooked truth : an argument, however, is not the worse for being old ; and surely it would have been a more just mode of reasoning, if you had examined the external evidence for the truth of Christianity, weighed the old arguments from miracles, and from prophecies, before you had rejected the whole account from the difficulties you met with in it. You would laugh at an Indian, who at peeping into a history of England, and meeting with the mention of the Thames being frozen, or of a shower of hail, or of snow, should throw the book aside, as unworthy of his further notice, from his want of ability to comprehend these phænomena.

In considering the argument from miracles ; you will soon be convinced, that it is possible for God to work miracles ; and you will be convinced, that it is as possible for human testimony, to establish the truth of miraculous, as of physical or historical events ; but before you can be convinced, that the miracles in question, are supported by such testimony, as
deserves

* De Leg. Lib. x.

deserves to be credited, you must inquire at what period, and by what persons, the books of the Old and New Testament were composed; if you reject the account, without making this examination, you reject it from prejudice, not from reason.

There is however a short method of examining this argument, which may, perhaps make as great an impression on your minds as any other. Three men of distinguished abilities, rose up at different times, and attacked Christianity with every objection which their malice could suggest, or their learning could devise; but neither Celsus in the second century, nor Porphyry in the third, nor the emperor Julian himself in the fourth century, ever questioned the reality of the miracles related in the Gospels. Do but you grant us, what these men (who were more likely to know the truth of the matter, than you can be) granted to their adversaries, and we will very readily let you make the most of the Magic, to which, as the last wretched shift, they were forced to attribute them. We can find you men, in our days, who from the mixture of two colourless liquors, will produce you a third as red as blood, or of any other colour you desire; *Et dicto citius*, by a drop resembling water, will restore the transparency: they will make two fluids coalesce into a solid body, and
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from the mixture of the liquors colder than ice, will instantly raise up a horrid explosion and a tremendous flame : these and twenty other tricks they will perform, without having been sent with our Saviour to Egypt to learn magic ; nay, with a bottle or two of oil, they will compose the undulation of a lake ; and by a little art, they will restore the functions of life to a man, who has been an hour or two under water, or a day or two buried in the snow : but in vain will these men, or the greatest Magician that Egypt ever saw, say to a boisterous sea, *Peace, be still* ; in vain will they say to a carcase rotting in the grave, *Come forth* ; the winds and the sea will not obey them, and the putrid carcase will not hear them. You need not suffer yourselves to be deprived of the weight of this argument, from its having been observed, that the fathers have acknowledged the supernatural part of Paganism ; since the fathers were in no condition to detect a cheat, which was supported both by the disposition of the people, and the power of the civil magistrate * ; and they were from that inability, forced to attribute to infernal agency, what was too cunningly contrived to be detected, and contrived for too impious a purpose, to be credited as the work of God.

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* See Lord Lyttlet. Obs. on St. Paul. p. 59.

With respect to prophecy, you may perhaps have accustomed yourselves to consider it, as originating in Asiatic enthusiasm, in Chaldean mystery, or in the subtle stratagem of interested Priests ; and have given yourselves no more trouble concerning the predictions of sacred, than concerning the oracles of Pagan history. Or if you have ever cast a glance upon this subject, the dissensions of learned men concerning the proper interpretation of the revelation, and other difficult prophecies, may have made you rashly conclude, that all prophecies were equally unintelligible ; and more indebted for their accomplishment, to a fortunate concurrence of events, and the pliant ingenuity of the expositor, than to the inspired foresight of the prophet. In all that the prophets of the Old Testament have delivered, concerning the destruction of particular cities, and the desolation of particular kingdoms, you may see nothing but shrewd conjectures, which any one acquainted with the history of the rise and fall of empires, might certainly have made : and as you would not hold him for a prophet, who should now affirm that London or Paris would afford to future ages, a spectacle just as melancholy, as that which we now contemplate, with a sigh, in the ruins of Agrigentum or Palmyra ; so you cannot persuade yourself to believe, that the denunciati-

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ons of the prophets against the haughty cities of Tyre or Babylon, for instance, proceeded from the inspiration of the Deity. There is no doubt that by some such general kind of reasoning, many are influenced to pay no attention to an argument, which, if properly considered, carries with it the strongest conviction.

Spinoza said, That he would have broken his Atheistic system to pieces, and embraced without repugnance, the ordinary faith of Christians, if he could have persuaded himself of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead ; and I question not, that there are many disbelievers, who would relinquish their Deistic tenets, and receive the gospel, if they could persuade themselves, that God had ever so far interfered in the moral government of the world, as to illumine the mind of any one man with the knowledge of future events. A miracle strikes the senses of the persons who see it, a prophecy addresses itself to the understandings of those who behold its completion, and it requires, in many cases some learning, in all some attention, to judge of the correspondence of events with the predictions concerning them. No one can be convinced, that what Jeremiah and the other Prophets foretold of the fate of Babylon, that it should be besieged by the Medes ; that it should be taken,

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when her mighty men were drunken, when her springs were dried up ; and that it should become a pool of water, and should remain desolate for ever, no one, I say, can be convinced, that all these and other parts of the prophetic denunciation, have been minutely fulfilled, without spending some time in reading the accounts, which prophane Historians have delivered down to us concerning its being taken by Cyrus ; and which modern travellers have given us of its present situation.

Porphyry was so persuaded of the coincidence between the prophecies of Daniel and the events, that he was forced to affirm, the prophecies were written, after the things prophesied of had happened ; another Porphyry has, in our days been so astonished at the correspondence between the prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, as related by St. Matthew, and the history of that event, as recorded by Josephus ; that rather than embrace Christianity, he has ventured (contrary to the faith of all ecclesiastical history, the opinion of the learned of all ages, and all the rules of good criticism) to assert, that St. Matthew wrote his gospel after Jerusalem had been taken and destroyed by the Romans. You may from these instances perceive the strength of the argument from prophecy ; it has not been able indeed to vanquish the prejudices of
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either the ancient or the modern Porphyry ; but it has been able to compel them both, to be guilty of obvious falsehoods, which have nothing but impudent assertions to support them.

Some over-zealous interpreters of scripture have found prophecies in simple narrations, extended real predictions beyond the times and circumstances, to which they natually were applied, and perplexed their readers with a thousand quaint allusions and allegorical conceits ; this proceeding has made men of sense pay less regard to prophecy in general ; there are some predictions however, such as those concerning the present state of the Jewish people, and the corruption of Christianity, which are now fulfilling in the world ; and which, if you will take the trouble to examine them, you will find of such an extraordinary nature, that you will not perhaps hesitate to refer them to God as their author ; and if you once become persuaded of the truth of any one miracle, or of the completion of any one prophecy, you will resolve all your difficulties (concerning the manner of God's interposition, in the moral government of our species, and the nature of the doctrines contained in revelation) into your own inability fully to comprehend the whole scheme of divine Providence.

We are told however, that the strangeness of the narration, and the difficulty of the doctrines contained in the New Testament, are not the only circumstances which induce you to reject it; you have discovered, you think, so many contradictions, in the accounts which the Evangelists have given of the life of Christ, that you are compelled to consider the whole as an ill-digested and improbable story. You would not reason thus, upon any other occasion; you would not reject as fabulous the accounts given by Livy and Polybius, of Hannibal and the Carthaginians, though you should discover a difference betwixt them in several points of little importance. You cannot compare the history of the same events as delivered by any two historians, but you will meet with many circumstances, which, though mentioned by one, are either wholly omitted or differently related by the other; and this observation is peculiarly applicable to biographical writings: But no one ever thought of disbelieving the leading circumstances of the lives of Vitellius or Vespasian, because Tacitus and Suetonius did not in every thing correspond in their accounts of these emperors; and if the memoirs of the life and doctrines of M. de Voltaire himself, were some twenty or thirty years after his death, to be delivered to the world

world by four of his most intimate acquaintance ; I do not apprehend that we should discredit the whole account of such an extraordinary man, by reason of some slight inconsistencies and contradictions, which the avowed enemies of his name might chance to discover in the several narrations. Though we should grant you then, that the Evangelists had fallen into some trivial contradictions, in what they have related concerning the life of Christ ; yet you ought not to draw any other inference from our concession, than that they had not plotted together, as cheats would have done, in order to give an exceptionable consistency to their fraud. We are not however disposed to make you any such concession ; we will rather shew you the futility of your general argument, by touching upon a few of the places, which you think are most liable to your censure.

You observe that neither Luke, nor Mark, nor John have mentioned the cruelty of Herod in murdering the infants of Bethlehem ; and that no account is to be found of this matter in Josephus, who wrote the life of Herod ; and therefore the fact recorded by Matthew is not true.—The concurrent testimony of many independent writers concerning a matter of fact, unquestionably adds to its probability ; but if nothing is to be received as true, upon the testimony of a single author, we must give up

some of the best writers, and disbelieve some of the most interesting facts of ancient history.

According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, there was only an interval of three months you say, between the baptism and crucifixion of Jesus; from which time, taking away the forty days of the temptation, there will only remain about six weeks for the whole period of his public ministry; which lasted however, according to St. John, at the least above three years.—Your objection fairly stated stands thus, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in writing the history of Jesus Christ, mention the several events of his life, as following one another in continued succession, without taking notice of the times in which they happened; but is it a just conclusion from their silence, to infer that there really were no intervals of time between the transactions which they seem to have connected? many instances might be produced from the most admired biographers of antiquity, in which events are related, as immediately consequent to each other, which did not happen but at very distant periods; we have an obvious example of this manner of writing in St. Matthew; who connects the preaching of John the Baptist, with the return of Joseph from Egypt, though we are certain, that the latter event preceded the former by a great many years.

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John has said nothing of the institution of the Lord's supper, the other Evangelists have said nothing of the washing of the disciples feet :—What then ? are you not ashamed to produce those facts, as instances of contradiction ? if omissions are contradictions, look into the history of the age of Louis the fourteenth, or into the general history of M. de Voltaire, and you will meet with a great abundance of contradictions.

John, in mentioning the discourse which Jesus had with his mother and his beloved disciple, at the time of his crucifixion, says, that she with Mary Magdalene, stood near the cross, Matthew, on the other hand, says, that Mary Magdalene and the other women were there, beholding afar off : this you think a manifest contradiction ; and scoffingly inquire, whether the women and the beloved disciple, which were near the cross, could be the same with those, who stood far from the cross ?—It is difficult not to transgress the bounds of moderation and good manners, in answering such sophistry ; what ! have you to learn, that though the Evangelists spake of the crucifixion, as of one event, it was not accomplished in one instant, but lasted several hours ? And why the women, who were at a distance from the cross, might not during its continuance, draw near the cross ; or from being near the cross,

might not move from the cross, is more than you can explain to either us, or yourselves. And we take from you your only refuge, by denying expressly, that the different Evangelists, in their mention of the women, speak of the same point of time.

The Evangelists, you affirm, are fallen into gross contradictions, in their accounts of the appearances) by which Jesus manifested himself to his disciples, after his resurrection from the dead; for Matthew speaks of two, Mark of three, Luke of two, and John of four. That contradictory propositions cannot be true, is readily granted; and if you will produce the place, in which Matthew says, that Jesus Christ appeared twice and *no oftner*, it will be further granted, that he is contradicted by John, in a very material part of his narration; but till you do that, you must excuse me, if I cannot grant, that the Evangelists have contradicted each other in this point; for to common understandings it is pretty evident that if Christ appeared four times, according to John's account, he must have appeared twice, according to that of Matthew and Luke, and thrice according to that of Mark.

The different Evangelists are not only accused of contradicting each other, but Luke is said to have contradicted himself; for in his Gospel he tells us, that Jesus ascended into Heaven

ven from Bethany; and in the Acts of the Apostles, of which he is the reputed author, he informs us, that he ascended from Mount Olivet.—Your objection proceeds either from your ignorance or geography, or your ill-will to Christianity; and upon either supposition, deserves our contempt; be pleased, however, to remember for the future, that Bethany was not only the name of a town, but of a district of Mount Olivet adjoining to the town.

From this specimen of the contradictions, ascribed to the historians of the life of Christ, you may judge for yourselves, what little reason there is to reject Christianity upon their account; and how sadly you will be imposed upon (in a matter of more consequence to you than any other) if you take every thing for a contradiction, which the uncandid adversaries of Christianity think proper to call one.

Before I put an end to this address, I cannot help taking notice of an argument, by which some philosophers have of late endeavoured to overturn the whole system of revelation: And it is the more necessary to give an answer to their objection, as it is become a common subject of philosophical conversation, especially amongst those, who have visited the continent. The objection tends to invalidate, as is supposed, the authority of Moses; by shewing, that the earth is much older, than it can be proved

proved to be from his account of the creation, and the scripture chronology. We contend, that six thousand years have not yet elapsed, since the creation ; and these philosophers contend, that they have indubitable proof of the earth's being at the least fourteen thousand years old ; and they complain, that Moses hangs as a dead weight upon them, and blunts all their zeal for inquiry *.

The Canonico Recupero, who it seems, is engaged in writing the history of Mount Etna, has discovered a stratum of Lava, which flowed from that mountain, according to his opinion, in the time of the second Punic war, or about two thousand years ago ; this stratum is not yet covered with soil, sufficient for the production of either corn or vines ; it requires then, says the Canon, two thousand years, at least, to convert a stratum of lava, into a fertile field. In sinking a pit near *Jaci*, in the neighbourhood of Etna, they have discovered evident marks of seven distinct lavas, one under the other ; the surfaces of which are parallel, and most of them covered with a thick bed of rich earth ; now the eruption, which formed the lowest of these lavas, (if we may be allowed to reason, says the Canon, from analogy) flowed from the mountain at least fourteen thousand
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* Brydone's Travels.

years ago.—It might be briefly answered to this objection, by denying, that there is any thing in the history of Moses repugnant to this opinion concerning the great antiquity of the earth; for though the rise and progress of arts and sciences, and the small multiplication of the human species, render it almost to a demonstration probable, that man has not existed longer upon the surface of this earth, than according to the Mosaic account; yet that the earth itself was then created out of nothing, when man was placed upon it, is not, according to the sentiments of some philosophers, to be proved from the original text of sacred scripture; we might, I say, reply, with these philosophers, to this formidable objection of the Canon, by granting it in its full extent; we are under no necessity, however, of adopting their opinion, in order to shew the weakness of the Canon's reasoning. For in the first place, the Canon has not satisfactorily established his main fact, that the lava in question, is the identical lava, which Diodorus Siculus mentions to have flowed from Etna, in the second Carthaginian war; and in the second place, it may be observed, that the time necessary for converting lavas into fertile fields, must be very different, according to the different consistencies of the lavas, and their different situations, with respect to elevation or depression; to their being exposed to winds, rains,

rains, and to other circumstances ; just as the time, in which the heaps of iron slag (which resembles lava) are covered with verdure, is different at different furnaces, according to the nature of the slag, and situation of the furnace; and something of this kind is deducible from the account of the Canon himself ; since the crevices of this famous stratum are really full of rich good soil, and have pretty large trees growing in them.

But if all this should be thought not sufficient to remove the objection, I will produce the Canon an analogy in opposition to his analogy, and which is grounded on more certain facts. Etna and Vesuvius resemble each other, in the causes which produce their eruptions, and in the nature of their lavas, and in the time necessary to mellow them into soil fit for vegetation ; or if there be any slight difference in this respect, it is probably not greater than what subsists between different lavas of the same mountain. This being admitted, which no philosopher will deny, the Canon's analogy will prove just nothing at all, if we can produce an instance of seven different lavas (with interjacent strata of vegetable earth) which have flowed from Mount Vesuvius, within the space, not of fourteen thousand, but of somewhat less than seventeen hundred years ; for then, according to our analogy, a stratum of lava may be covered with vegetable soil, in
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about two hundred and fifty years, instead of requiring two thousand for the purpose. The eruption of Vesuvius, which destroyed Herculaneum and Pompeii, is rendered still more famous by the death of Pliny, recorded by his nephew, in his letter to Tacitus; this event happened in the year 79; it is not yet then quite seventeen hundred years since Herculaneum was swallowed up: but we are informed by unquestionable authority, that “the matter which covers the ancient town of Herculaneum, is not the produce of one eruption only; for there are evident marks, that the matter of six eruptions has taken its course over that which lies immediately above the town, and was the cause of its destruction. These strata are either of lava or burnt matter, *with veins of good soil betwixt them.*” *— I will not add another word upon this subject; except that the bishop of the diocese, was not much out in his advice to Canonico Recupero—to take care, not to make his mountain older than Moses; though it would have been full as well, to have shut his mouth with a reason, as to have stopped it with the dread of an ecclesiastical censure.

You perceive, with what ease a little attention will remove a great difficulty; but had we

* See Sir William Hamilton's Remarks upon the Nature of the Soil of Naples and its Neighbourhood, in the Philos. Transf. Vol. lxi. p. 7.

we been able to say nothing, in explanation of this phenomenon, we should not have acted a very rational part, in making our ignorance the foundation of our infidelity, or suffering a minute philosopher to rob us of our religion.

Your objections to revelation, may be numerous ; you may find fault with the account, which Moses has given of the creation and the fall ; you may not be able to get water enough for an universal deluge ; nor room enough in the ark of Noah, for all the different kinds of aerial and terrestrial animals ; you may be dissatisfied with the command for sacrificing of Isaac, for plundering the Egyptians, and for extirpating the Canaanites ; you may find fault with the Jewish œconomy, for its ceremonies, its sacrifices, and its multiplicity of priests ; you may object to the imprecations in the psalms, and think the immoralities of David, a fit subject for dramatic ridicule ;* you may look upon the partial promulgation of Christianity, as an insuperable objection to its truth ; and waywardly reject the goodness of God toward yourselves, because you do not comprehend, how you have deserved it more than others ; you may know nothing of the entrance of sin and death into the world, by one man's transgression ;

* See, Saul et David Hyperdrame.

Whatever censure the author of this composition may deserve for his intention, the work itself deserves none ; its ridicule is too gross, to mislead even the ignorant.

transgression ; nor be able to comprehend the doctrine of the cross and of redemption by Jesus Christ ; in short, if your mind is so disposed, you may find food for your scepticism in every page of the Bible, as well as in every appearance of nature ; and it is not in the power of any person, but yourselves, to clear up your doubts ; you must read, and you must think for yourselves ; and you must do both with temper, with candour, and with care. Infidelity is a rank weed ; it is nurtured by our vices, and cannot be plucked up as easily as it may be planted : your difficulties, with respect to revelation, may have first arisen, from your own reflection on the religious indifference of those, whom from your earliest infancy, you have been accustomed to revere and imitate ; domestic irreligion may have made you a willing hearer of libertine conversation ; and the uniform prejudices of the world, may have finished the business at a very early age ; and left you to wander through life, without a principle to direct your conduct, and to die without hope. We are far from wishing you to trust the word of the clergy for the truth of your religion ; we beg of you to examine it to the bottom, to try it, to prove it, and not to hold it fast unless you find it good. Till you are disposed to undertake this task, it becomes you to consider with great seriousness and attention, whether it can be for your interest

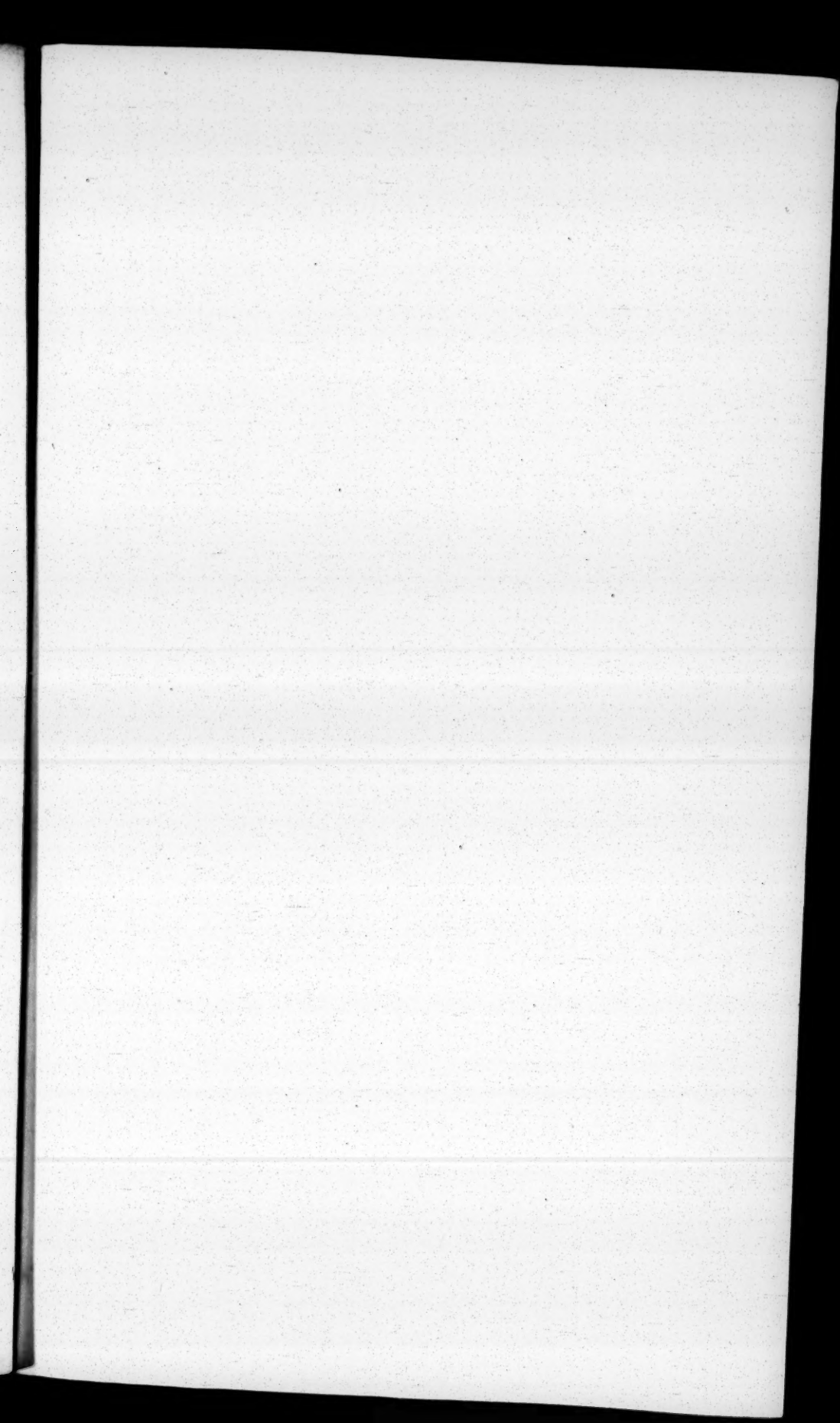
terest to esteem a few witty sarcasms, or metaphysic subtleties, or ignorant misrepresentations, or unwarranted assertions, as unanswerable arguments against revelation; and a very slight reflection will convince you, that it will certainly be for your reputation, to employ the flippancy of your rhetoric and the poignancy of your ridicule, upon any subject, rather than upon the subject of religion.

I take my leave with recommending to your notice, the advice which Mr. Locke gave to a young man, who was desirous of becoming acquainted with the doctrines of the Christian religion. "Study the holy scripture, especially the new Testament: therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author; Salvation for its end; and Truth without any mixture of error for its matter *." **12 JY 62**

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* Locke's Posth. Works.

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